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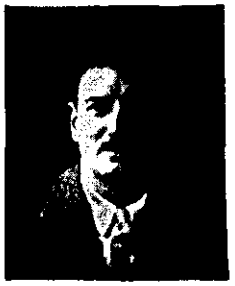

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PRIVATE LIFE OF CATHERINE THE GREAT *by Princesse Lucien Murat* (CARRIER. $2.50)

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THE eventful life of Isadora Duncan in Soviet Russia and the creation of her last revolutionary dances, her final visit to America and her last days in France are covered in this book, and the tragic story of her marriage with Essenine, her peasant-poet husband. Allan Ross Macdougall, for some time secretary to Isadora Duncan, has collaborated with Irma Duncan.

THE ENCHANTRESS *by Helen Henderson* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $4.50)

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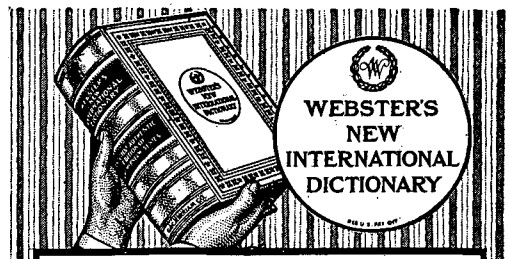

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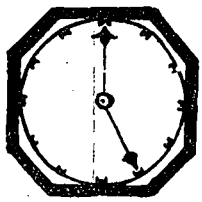

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The Social Sciences

THE *A B C* OF ADLER'S PSYCHOLOGY *by Philippe Mairet* (GREENBERG. $1.50)

THE author of this little volume is a disciple of the Viennese doctor whose principles he seeks to clarify. He is quite concerned over the tendency of readers of the Adlerian psychology to assume that it is synonymous with psycho-analysis. Because of this concern, he goes to some length to point out that Adler's Individual Psychology is not that of Freud and Jung; it is a system which seeks to know the individual in all the aspects of his life. In seeking such knowledge, adherents to Adler's system make use of the psycho-analytic technique, but they do not accept Freud's theory of eroticism as the basis of all neuroses. They assume the hypothesis of the inferiority feeling and complex as their point of departure, holding that man's behavior, mainly, if not entirely, is of a compensatory nature which indicates his attempts to make up for his real or fancied shortcomings. M. Mairet's volume does not pretend to be exhaustive; it is a good introduction to Adler's *Understanding Human Nature.*

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M. LÉVY-BRUHL has followed up his previous volume, *Primitive Mentality,* by this equally significant and absorbing work on the primitive's "soul". He points out in his Foreword that the savage has no notions of his own individuality; he has what the author terms "pre-notions". The unit of the primitive's thinking is the group, rather than the individual; the infant is not considered wholly born until admitted to group life; the dead rejoin their clan in a nebulous world beyond the present. Primitive language reveals, in its possessive suffixes and personal pronouns, so fine a discrimination between the "we" group and the "they" group that one's sister is designated by a suffix indicating membership in the former, but one's wife is designated by a personal pronoun indicating her origin in the latter group. In his discussion of the limitation of individuality, the author refers to the extension of personality to the individual's

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appurtenances—his hair, nails, skin, etc.—which are regarded, not as a part of the man, but as the man himself. (This point recalls the recent hexing activities in Pennsylvania.) In his last chapter, M. Lévy-Bruhl intimates that the primitive's "soul" is closely bound up with his name; that immortality is achieved, according to the primitive belief, by passing one's name on to the next generation.

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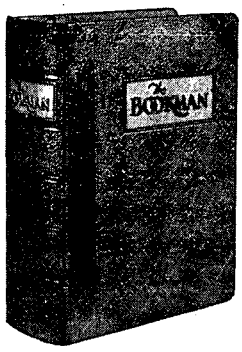

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his attitude toward his womanfolk, his government and his personal as well as his national neighbors. Mr. Parmalee includes, among many other things, a discussion of sex in the Orient, racial prejudice among easterners and toward westerners, toleration and political interrelationships in China and Korea.

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THE RAINMAKERS *by Mary Roberts Coolidge* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $4.00)

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pressors. His cables never appeared in newspaper columns. He interviewed Mussolini, Hindenburg (when the echo of the Armistice had not yet died down, an act for which Pershing clapped him into jail) D'Annunzio, Bratianu, Queen Marie and Lenin. Most of them, if not all, were considerably annoyed by his accounts of events in their countries and exerted pressure somewhere, with the result that Mr. Seldes was told repeatedly, "You can't print *that!*" He believes that the pressure exerted was transmitted via the American diplomatic corps, financial interests involved in the flotation of foreign loans and political figures in the United States. Whether the reader agrees with these statements or not, he will be vastly entertained by the author's reckless impudence, interested by his inside information and impressed by his ardent honesty. Controversy is already well begun among his fellow journalists.

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APRIL, 1929 VOL. LXIX; NO. 2

THE ABSURDITY OF TEACHING ENGLISH

by Albert Jay Nock

One notices a good deal of complaint going around lately about "English as she is taught", most of it directed against an imperfect pedagogy. The situation seems to be this: students go out of our schools unable to use English properly, and with no interest in the better sort of English literature. They have had enough teaching; the amount of time and effort devoted to this subject seems ample—one hardly sees how it could be increased in fairness to other pursuits held indispensable to an education. Hence, the usual inference is that the subject is badly taught. In a recent issue of THE BOOKMAN, Mr. Townsend makes some very good and pungent observations about the curriculum; entrance requirements are fossilized and their treatment too strictly anatomical; high school children might thrive better on *Babbitt* and the *Spoon River Anthology* than on *Macbeth* and *Ivanhoe*. Then there is colonialism; our schools do too much with British literature and too little with American. The treatment of literature is overly professional and Procrustean—and so on.

I do not feel that I am competent to discuss these matters. They represent Mr. Townsend's diagnosis of a case which he describes admirably. "When the average collegian leaves his *alma mater*," Mr. Townsend says, "he packs away his Shakespeare and his Thackeray in the same trunk with his football jersey and his ukulele. After he settles down to selling bonds, real estate, sealing-wax or socks, he reads only newspapers, trade journals and his bank book. The female of the species is more apt to retain bookish inclinations, but these far too often take the form of devouring sexy novels and haunting lectures by visiting English authors. The literary inoculations performed in colleges do not seem to take." Mr. Townsend suggests that if they were performed differently they might take better. As I said, I am not prepared to discuss the merits of Mr. Townsend's technique as compared with the present technique of the colleges. My suggestion—my firm belief—is that no change of technique will do a thing in the world for the type of patient that he is citing. Mr. Townsend's symptomatology is absolutely correct, but

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when he intimates that "the average collegian", man or woman, stands any chance of benefit by a change of treatment as a change of doctors, I must disagree with him. That patient should be referred straightway down the street to the undertaker.

In other words, whenever I read complaints about the way that English is taught, I am always inclined to move the previous question, Why should English be taught at all? Indeed, when one thinks of it, how *can* English be taught? I do not know. This latter question is not exactly academic with me for, two or three times lately, I have been invited to "teach English". All I could say was that I appreciated the compliment, but how in the world does one teach English? How does one go about it? English is my native tongue, the native tongue of those I should be pretending to teach. They have a native use of it, as I have. English literature is as wide open to them as it is to me; they have a native command of it, as I have. I would as soon think of undertaking to teach people how to breathe. For certain special purposes, such as singing or public speaking, there is no doubt a right way and a wrong way to breathe; but as far as actual teaching is concerned, the difference is a matter of ten minutes. Moreover, relatively few are out to sing or speak. If a young man or woman had some special use of English in view, he might learn something —not that I could teach him anything, but he might learn something—as the Flemish artists did by hanging around somebody's studio with their eyes open and picking up technical odds and ends. But to take on a casual and indifferent job-lot of youngsters—Tom, Dick and the Devil, and their girls—and pretend to teach them English out of hand is something I see no sense in doing and could no more do than I could fly.

Have those who discuss the subject ever considered the gross amount of English-teaching that is being done in this country, for better or worse, and asked themselves why it should be so large? Two years ago I brought this question up with an old friend who knows a good deal about the inner life of academic circles and we got to work at making a rough estimate of the number of "courses in English" that are offered annually in our colleges, universities and academies. It came to something like twenty thousand! Add to this the work done on the subject in the secondary schools (we could not even make a guess at how much it came to) and the total is pretty impressive. Teaching English would seem to be almost a major industry. Whatever else may be said in disparagement of this enterprise, there certainly is enough of it.

This remarkable inflation of curricular English is, moreover, something rather recent and something peculiar to the United States. I greatly doubt whether, fifty years ago, anything remotely resembling a "course in English", anything that a modern student would recognize as such, was offered anywhere in the country. I went to college considerably less long ago than that, and I never heard of one. We did about six weeks' work based on two thin, little books, one on the history of the English tongue, the other a treatise on rhetoric—not particularly English rhetoric, but rhetoric. That was all. I never saw the inside of an English grammar in my life; not that I am proud of it or claim anything for it, but having been "raised" on Greek and Latin grammar, it just happened so. Furthermore, I believe, though I cannot be quite sure, that my contemporaries in college were as poorly off for special exercise in this branch of learning as I was. I know they did not specialize in structural work in English while at college because there was no opportunity to do so and, as for reading-courses or lecture-courses in English literature, they simply did not know what those were.

Nevertheless, I do not recall a single one of my contemporaries who did not regularly and habitually speak good English. They wrote good English with no great effort. They still do both. They somehow managed

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to do something pretty respectable with English literature on their own and to cultivate a reasonably warm feeling for it. They knew their way to it much as they knew the way to their mouths, and regarded their ingestion of it as no more of an achievement than the ingestion of a square meal. I have run across some of them in later years and asked them how much they felt the deficiency of a few courses in English literature. They agreed with me that it would have been pleasant to have them, because we had to work pretty hard at college and there were hardly any soft snaps going, so a little something of the sort would have been acceptable.

Now, on the other hand, quite lately I had for two or three years something to do with editorial work, in a small way, and it brought me in contact with dozens and hundreds of young people fully accredited from the new academic world. They had "specialized in English", "done graduate work in English", and all that kind of thing. Some of them were "Ph.D.'s in English", and showed me dissertations on certain metrical peculiarities in some rather humdrum Restoration poet, perhaps—I do not remember just what the subjects were, but nothing very animating. To make a long story short, I never seined out of the whole shoal a single person who could write a decent English style or speak English even creditably. Slang helped out their conversation now and then (and slang is excellent when the use is governed by a sensitive literary taste, as their use of it was not), slang and slovenly paraphrase. I wondered what all their graduate work and specialization and Ph.D. panoply could possibly amount to. With all the English mills going full blast, one would say they ought, once in a while, to run off something beside solid slag. Then, extending my observations over contemporary literature, I wondered why the writing of English should in general be so poorly done in these days when English is most tremendously taught, and why it was so much better done, by and large, in the days when, as far as I know, it was not taught at all.

Perhaps English is badly taught, but can it be *that* badly taught? Probably Mr. Townsend's suggestions, properly taken to heart, would get it better taught, but would they get it enough better taught to turn as many as two or three of my fantastic goslings into able-bodied geese (one may not ask that they be swans)? I doubt it. I even think, though I say it with all due diffidence, that as much acquaintance with the average collegian as Mr. Townsend professes should be enough to breed as robust doubts as mine. Let me hasten to say that I am all on Mr. Townsend's side in his estimate of the general quality of the instruction given in our colleges and universities. The incurable Ph.D. seems to me a very poor affair and I am heartily for disposing of him as Mr. Townsend suggests. I fear, however, that if he were swept away bodily and replaced by an Erasmus in learning, an Abelard in teaching and a Socrates in humanity, all compounded in one, the results would not be noticeably more encouraging than those that are got at present. We should still have the average collegian to reckon with—the average collegian and his co-ed, perhaps of a sister institution like Vassar or Wellesley, perhaps of his own, and, where they are, there, from the educational point of view, are confusion and every evil work.

In the bad old times that I have just been speaking of, when "courses in English" were unknown, the average collegian was also unknown. He did not exist in college; if he appeared for a little time, he presently vanished away. The rise of this individual, I believe, goes far to account not only for the teaching of such an intolerable deal of English, but also for the phenomenon of immunity that Mr. Townsend has observed.

The educational system of this country is based upon the curious notion that literacy and intelligence are much more closely related than they are and that, therefore, everybody ought to go to school as much as he

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can. About thirty years ago, we began to carry out this idea to its logical length by sending everybody to college and the university. As a result (in part of this, in part of our general national belief that bigness means greatness) these institutions became infected with the mania for size. The big college was a great college; its rank was popularly set by numbers alone. We all remember that the first and usually the only question ever asked about a college was, "How many students has it?" To get as many students as possible, the college had to vary its requirements considerably; then when it had got the students, it had to find something for them to do that they could do; and, hence, the college became a mere *colluvies litterarum*.

The basic theory that everybody ought to go to school and, finally, that everybody ought to go to college found itself plumped up against the fact that not everybody has school-ability, let alone college-ability, assuming that a school remains in any remotely respectable sense a school. But the theory had to be carried out; it was even embodied in our truant laws, the most absurdly obscurantist effort of legislation, probably, of all pre-Volsteadism. So taking pattern by the colleges, the schools above the primary grade set about modifying themselves to accommodate this preposterous theory. They fed their culls into the desirous colleges, and the colleges found themselves with Mr. Townsend's average collegian on their hands. Vast hordes of him—and her—are now on their hands from Maine to California.

One gets a huge respect for American inventive genius when one looks over a college or university prospectus and remarks the "courses" that have been devised to give the Cro-Magnon intelligence of the average collegian the doubtful benefit of a passing-mark. I have not the heart to cite any specimens at large. One thing, however, the colleges felt pretty safe in thinking that the average collegian could do. He—and she—could read, after a fashion; not to any particularly good purpose, as a rule, but he could be trusted, probably, to go through some sort of excursion on the printed page without falling overboard beyond rescue. Well, then, clearly the thing to do was to dignify this performance by the name of a "course in English" and give him as large an option in these courses as possible. Somewhere, somehow, he would probably find a course or combination of courses that he could manage, with an occasional lift from his instructor. Hence, it is chiefly, I believe, that the delivery of "courses in English" runs up into the thousands.

Just so. Not long ago I potted some extracts from a report of instructors in English in one of our rich and overgrown universities, which tend somewhat to show the results of this enterprise. Certain sophomores and upperclassmen dealt with Shakespeare after this original and interesting fashion:

Edmund in *King Lear* "committed a base act and allowed his illegitimate father to see a forged letter". Cordelia's death "was the straw that broke the camel's back and killed the King". Lear's fool "was prostrated on the neck of the King". "Hotspur", averred a sophomore, "was a wild, irresolute man. He loved honor above all. He would go out and kill twenty Scotchmen before breakfast." Kate was "a woman who had something to do with hot spurs".

Milton fares as follows: "Diabetes was Milton's Italian friend", one student explained. Another said: "Satan had all the emotions of a woman, and was a sort of trustee in heaven, so to speak". The theme of *Comus* was given as "purity protestriate". Mammon in *Paradise Lost* suggests that the best way to "endure hell is to raise hell and build a pavilion".

It is, of course, quite competent for Mr. Townsend to say that these persons would have done better with Mr. Dreiser and Mr. Cabell than with Shakespeare and Milton; that Mr. Dreiser and Mr. Cabell would be more effectively dealt with by somebody else than the dyed-in-the-wool Ph.D. I cannot contradict him, and there is no way of know-

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ing but by experiment. Pending this, however, I must permit myself to indulge great doubt.

The average collegian does not get full credit, however, from Mr. Townsend. Intelligence he has none; but he has a certain low sagacity that inspires him to do just about the appropriate thing with reference to the main chance. When he leaves college and packs his Shakespeare and Thackeray away with his football jersey and his ukulele, I think he is acting very sensibly. If he packed away his Dreiser and Cabell also—or instead —I should again commend him. It strikes me that the average collegian has his own measure much more accurately than Mr. Townsend has it. He contemplates "settling down to selling bonds or real estate", which, as he perhaps might phrase it, is just about his speed. He has served his appointed time at college for reasons of his own, reasons which are quite frankly unrelated to anything contemplated by a study of English as an acquaintance with literature. From the point of view, therefore, of his intentions, ambitions and prospects, literary studies of whatever date and character are a bunch of hooey. I can enter completely into his sensibilities. Selling bonds or real estate, from any academic standpoint, is one of the lowest forms of human activity. If one is able to read newspapers, trade journals and a bank book, if one can understand a rudimentary order of human speech and can bend one's memory to compass a fairly simple run of talking-points, one's intellectual equipment for the job is about complete. The really important qualifications for selling bonds or real estate lie outside this purview, as any one who has ever seen any bond-salesman or real-estaters will perceive at once; and the average collegian's instinct in the premises is a sound one.

One more observation: the working out of our idea that everyone should go to school and college has had one odd result, I believe quite peculiar to our country. The burden of responsibility has been shifted from the student to the teacher. Mr. Dooley put it very well in his account of an interview of a modern college president with a gilded lad whose father had brought him in to enter college. "'Willie,' says th' president, 'what branch iv larnin' wud ye like to have studied f'r ye by our competent pro-fissors?'" Whatever goes wrong, whatever desirable results fail to accrue, the first and last assumption is that there is something wrong with pedagogues or pedagogy. In the practical routine of our system, too, the responsibility is officially always on the teacher; and all this is simply another measure of accommodation to the average collegian. It is something quite new, if my experience may be taken as an index, and certainly there is nothing like it in other countries, unless possibly—I do not know—in England. If the average collegian entered Louvain or Göttingen, he would be served as he would have been had he entered college in my day. He would be told that he was a *Dummkopf* and left to gravitate out; no teacher would do his work for him.

My belief is that the really formative and cultural side of American education will never amount to a hill of beans as long as its working common denominator is the average collegian. Why not off-load him on agriculture? He used to distinguish himself at that in the old days, instead of going to college, and agriculture, I hear, is in a bad way just now. Or, if he insists on selling bonds or real estate, let it be made known to him that college is no place of preparation for his particular enterprise, that he would be wasting not only his own time but other people's by going there and that he had better move on. His co-ed colleague used to keep her capable arms immersed in pumpkin batter, in the kitchen of a white-painted farmhouse set on a wind-swept hill; a respectable and pleasing figure, she was living just about up to the measure of her natural capacity. Why not point back to the joys of that simple and satisfying occupation and tell her that college is something different, requiring a

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different kind of machinery altogether, which she hasn't got and cannot acquire? If something like this were done, I think our culture would immediately begin to look up, and some of the problems that afflict Mr. Townsend would settle themselves. The teaching of English, for instance, would be cut down as near to bare bones as it is in England.

I am down on the average collegian and think it is high time someone spoke out plainly about him as a ruinous nuisance. I am also down on his co-ed sister. It is a false and fantastic conception of spurious democracy that keeps them to the fore. The average collegian has his function, but that function is cultivating corn or waving the reluctant bucksaw to and fro over the winter's hoard of four-foot wood, while his co-ed, as a neat-handed, strong-wristed Phyllis, flourishes a Turk's-head among the cobwebs in the front hall. They should have a primary education, perhaps a little secondary schooling, but no more, for they can take in no more. If they could, they would not be the average collegian and his co-ed, and we should hear from them accordingly.

We could hardly do better, I think, than to go back to the system that Mr. Jefferson proposed for the schools of Virginia. This was to give everybody a primary education, which then meant the three R's. Then, annually, take out the ten best primary pupils and put them in the secondary schools; take out the best ten from the secondary schools and put them in college; then the best ten from the college and let them go as far as they could in university studies. Thus, he said (and if anyone thinks I have been too plain-spoken about the average collegian, let him take it out of Mr. Jefferson, he being a great deal bigger than I am) thus, he said, "the ten best geniuses will be annually raked from the rubbish", and encouraged to go on.

Precisely so. At present it is just this rubbish that we rake into our colleges instead of keeping them out, and we adapt our curricula to fit their incompetence, indolence and imbecility with thousands of "courses in English" and similar gratuitous tomfoolery. I wish as much as anybody to see our pedagogy braced up and its faults corrected, but as long as everything in the academic world is pitched to the resonant, intellectual vacuity of Mr. Townsend's average collegian and his girl, I submit that it makes precious little difference what sort of pedagogy we have or what its faults are. Clear out the average collegian and his half-witted flapper desk mate, and I will then lend my interest, if anyone wishes it, but no sooner, to more intimate and technical reforms.

After I had posted the foregoing, the next mail brought me a curious confirmation of its basic view. I got a letter from a young girl, only by two or three years a graduate of one of our most prominent women's colleges which, not to identify the institution too closely, I shall call Weiblich College. My young friend enclosed an advertising broadsheet published by the Alumnae office; a broadsheet wholly pictorial, like the rotogravure section of a Sunday newspaper. The first picture, over the caption, "A Dream Come True", showed a new stone building called the Hall of Euthenics, in which the students may take courses in baby-tending. The babies are to be supplied by a neighboring nursery school, with which the college has some kind of traffic arrangements apparently, and the broadsheet carries a couple of group pictures of these infants. The general caption of the broadsheet is composed in the true go-getter's style; it even carries the true go-getter's clichés:

> Babies and basketball; . . . professors who have built their lives into generations of students; this year's undergraduates, working, playing and thinking in the terms of 1929—all are part of the varied, vibrant life which is Weiblich.

Now, the state of things intimated here is by no means peculiar to this institution; it may be duplicated almost anywhere, I think. As

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my young friend remarked in some blistering comment on this exhibit: "courses" in baby-tending run about even in respectability with "courses" in bond-selling or hotel-clerking. No doubt of that; and, therefore, Weiblich College should not feel picked upon by me for disagreeable attentions. I cite this project in Euthenics merely as casual evidence—like the innumerable and unconscionable "courses in English"—of a tendency on the part of our institutions to accommodate themselves to grotesquely impossible circumstances. The sum of the matter, no doubt, is that nine-tenths of the students at Weiblich College are incapable of anything that might by the utmost stretch of good will be called an education; not only incapable of it but indifferent to it; and that the college feels that it must trim to this incapacity and indifference rather than cut it adrift.

It is a sorry choice; and I say again that when this choice is suspended and the American college and secondary school can become educational institutions—then, and not sooner, shall I become interested in complaints about their mechanism.

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A man adrift on a slim spar
A horizon smaller than the rim of a bottle
Jented waves rearing lashy dark points
The near whine of froth in circles.
God is cold.

The incessant raise ~~of~~ and swing of the sea
And growl after growl of crest
The sinkings green, seething, endless
The upheaval, half-completed.
God is cold

The seas are in the hollow of The Hand;
Oceans ~~are~~ may be turned to a spray
Ramming down through the stars
~~By the~~ Because of a gesture of pity toward a ~~child~~ babe.
~~God is cold~~
~~The seas~~ Oceans may become ~~turn to~~ grey ashes,.
Die with a long moan and a roar
Amid the tumult of the fishes
And the cries of the ships,
Because The Hand beckons the mice.

A horizon smaller than a doomed assassin's cap.
Inky, surging tumults
A reeling, drunken sky and no sky
A pale hand sliding from a polished spar
God is cold.

The puff of a coat imprisoning air:
A face kissing the water-death
A weary slow sway of a lost hand
And the sea, the roving sea, the sea.
God is cold. ~~God is cold~~

Stephen Crane

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THREE POEMS

by Stephen Crane

I

A man adrift on a slim spar
A horizon smaller than the rim of a bottle
Tented waves rearing lashy dark points
The near whine of froth in circles.
God is cold.

The incessant raise and swing of the sea
And growl after growl of crest
The sinkings, green, seething, endless
The upheaval half-completed.
God is cold.

The seas are in the hollow of The Hand;
Oceans may be turned to a spray
Raining down through the stars
Because of a gesture of pity toward a babe.
Oceans may become grey ashes,
Die with a long moan and a roar
Amid the tumult of the fishes
And the cries of the ships,
Because The Hand beckons the mice.
A horizon smaller than a doomed assassin's cap,
Inky, surging tumults
A reeling, drunken sky and no sky
A pale hand sliding from a polished spar.
God is cold.

The puff of a coat imprisoning air:
A face kissing the water-death
A weary slow sway of a lost hand
And the sea, the moving sea, the sea.
God is cold.

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II

Chant you loud of punishments,
Of the twisting of the heart's poor strings
Of the crash of the lightning's fierce revenge.

Then sing I of the supple-souled men
And the strong, strong gods
That shall meet in times hereafter
And the amaze of the gods
At the strength of the men.
—The strong, strong gods—
—And the supple-souled men—

III

A naked woman and a dead dwarf;
Poor dwarf!
Reigning with foolish kings
And dying mid bells and wine
Ending with a desperate comic palaver
While before thee and after thee
Endures the eternal clown—
—The eternal clown—
A naked woman.

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PHASES OF FICTION

by Virginia Woolf

IN THREE PARTS: PART ONE

THE following pages attempt to record the impressions made upon the mind by reading a certain number of novels in succession. In deciding which book to begin with and which book to go on with, the mind was not pressed to make a choice. It was allowed to read what it liked. It was not, that is to say, asked to read historically, nor was it asked to read critically. It was asked to read only for interest and pleasure and, at the same time, to comment as it read upon the nature of the interest and the pleasure that it found. It went its way, therefore, independent of time and reputation. It read Trollope before it read Jane Austen and skipped, by chance or negligence, some of the most celebrated books in English fiction. Thus, there is little reference or none to Fielding, Richardson or Thackeray.

Yet, if nobody save the professed historian and critic reads to understand a period or to revise a reputation, nobody reads simply by chance or without a definite scale of values. There is, to speak metaphorically, some design that has been traced upon our minds which reading brings to light. Desires, appetites, however we may come by them, fill it in, scoring now in this direction, now in that. Hence, an ordinary reader can often trace his course through literature with great exactness and can even think himself, from time to time, in possession of a whole world as inhabitable as the real world. Such a world, it may be urged against it, is always in process of creation. Such a world, it may be added, likewise against it, is a personal world, a world limited and unhabitable perhaps by other people, a world created in obedience to tastes that may be peculiar to one temperament and distasteful to another—indeed, any such record of reading, it will be concluded, is bound to be limited, personal, erratic.

In its defense, however, it may be claimed that if the critic and the historian speak a more universal language, a more learned language, they are also likely to miss the centre and to lose their way for the simple reason that they know so many things about a writer that a writer does not know about himself. Writers are heard to complain that influences—education, heredity, theory—are given weight of which they themselves are unconscious in the act of creation. Is the author in question the son of an architect or a bricklayer? Was he educated at home or at the university? Does he come before or after Thomas Hardy? Yet no one of these things is in his mind, perhaps, as he writes and the reader's ignorance, narrowing and limiting as it is, has at least the advantage that it leaves unhampered what the reader has in common with the writer, though much more feebly: the desire to create.

Here, then, very briefly and with inevitable simplifications, an attempt is made to show the mind at work upon a shelf full of novels

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and to watch it as it chooses and rejects, making itself a dwelling place in accordance with its own appetites. Of these appetites, perhaps, the simplest is the desire to believe wholly and entirely in something which is fictitious. That appetite leads on all the others in turn. There is no saying, for they change so much at different ages, that one appetite is better than another. The common reader is, moreover, suspicious of fixed labels and settled hierarchies. Still, since there must be an original impulse, let us give the lead to this one and start upon the shelf full of novels in order to gratify our wish to believe.

The Truth-Tellers

In English fiction there are a number of writers who gratify our sense of belief—Defoe, Swift, Trollope, Borrow, W. E. Norris, for example; among the French, one thinks instantly of Maupassant. Each of them assures us that things are precisely as they say they are. What they describe happens actually before our eyes. We get from their novels the same sort of refreshment and delight that we get from seeing something actually happen in the street below. A dustman, for example, by an awkward movement of his arm knocks over a bottle apparently containing Condy's Fluid which cracks upon the pavement. The dustman gets down; he picks up the jagged fragments of the broken bottle; he turns to a man who is passing in the street. We cannot take our eyes off him until we have feasted our powers of belief to the full. It is as if a channel were cut, into which suddenly and with great relief an emotion hitherto restrained rushes and pours. We forget whatever else we may be doing. This positive experience overpowers all the mixed and ambiguous feelings of which we may be possessed at the moment. The dustman has knocked over a bottle; the red stain is spreading on the pavement. It happens precisely so.

The novels of the great truth-tellers, of whom Defoe is easily the English chief, procure for us a refreshment of this kind. He tells us the story of Moll Flanders, of Robinson Crusoe, of Roxana, and we feel our powers of belief rush into the channel, thus cut, instantly, fertilizing and refreshing our entire being. To believe seems the greatest of all pleasures. It is impossible to glut our greed for truth, so rapacious is it. There is not a shadowy or insubstantial word in the whole book to startle our nervous sense of security. Three or four strong, direct strokes of the pen carve out Roxana's character. Her dinner is set indisputably on the table. It consists of veal and turnips. The day is fine or cloudy; the month is April or September. Persistently, naturally, with a curious, almost unconscious iteration, emphasis is laid upon the very facts that most reassure us of stability in real life, upon money, furniture, food, until we seem wedged among solid objects in a solid universe.

One element of our delight comes from the sense that this world, with all its circumstantiality, bright and round and hard as it is, is yet complete, so that in whatever direction we reach out for assurance we receive it. If we press on beyond the confines of each page, as it is our instinct to do, completing what the writer has left unsaid, we shall find that we can trace our way; that there are indications which let us realize them; there is an under side, a dark side to this world. Defoe presided over his universe with the omnipotence of a God, so that his world is perfectly in scale. Nothing is so large that it makes another thing too small; nothing so small that it makes another thing too large.

The name of God is often found on the lips of his people, but they invoke a deity only a little less substantial than they are themselves, a being seated solidly not so very far above them in the tree tops. A divinity more mystical, could Defoe have made us believe in him, would so have discredited the landscape and cast doubt upon the substance of the men and women that our belief in them would have perished at the heart. Or,

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suppose that he let himself dwell upon the green shades of the forest depths or upon the sliding glass of the summer stream. Again, however much we were delighted by the description, we should have been uneasy because this other reality would have wronged the massive and monumental reality of Crusoe and Moll Flanders. As it is, saturated with the truth of his own universe, no such discrepancy is allowed to intrude. God, man, nature are all real, and they are all real with the same kind of reality—an astonishing feat, since it implies complete and perpetual submission on the writer's part to his conviction, an obdurate deafness to all the voices which seduce and tempt him to gratify other moods. We have only to reflect how seldom a book is carried through on the same impulse of belief, so that its perspective is harmonious throughout, to realize how great a writer Defoe was. One could number on one's fingers half a dozen novels which set out to be masterpieces and yet have failed because the belief flags; the realities are mixed; the perspective shifts and, instead of a final clarity, we get a baffling, if only a momentary confusion.

Having, now, feasted our powers of belief to the full and so enjoyed the relief and rest of this positive world existing so palpably and completely outside of us, there begins to come over us that slackening of attention which means that the nerve in use is sated for the time being. We have absorbed as much of this literal truth as we can and we begin to crave for something to vary it that will yet be in harmony with it. We do not want, except in a flash or a hint, such truth as Roxana offers us when she tells us how her master, the Prince, would sit by their child and "loved to look at it when it was asleep". For that truth is hidden truth; it makes us dive beneath the surface to realize it and so holds up the action. It is, then, action that we want. One desire having run its course, another leaps forward to take up the burden and no sooner have we formulated our desire than Defoe has given it to us. "On with the story"—that cry is forever on his lips. No sooner has he got his facts assembled than the burden is floated. Perpetually springing up, fresh and effortless, action and event, quickly succeeding each other thus, set in motion this dense accumulation of facts and keep the breeze blowing in our faces. It becomes obvious, then, that if his people are sparely equipped and bereft of certain affections, such as love of husband and child, which we expect of people at leisure, it is that they may move quicker. They must travel light since it is for adventure that they are made. They will need quick wits, strong muscles and a rocky common sense on the road they are to travel rather than sentiment, reflection or the power of self-analysis.

Belief, then, is completely gratified by Defoe. Here, the reader can rest himself and enter into possession of a large part of his domain. He tests it; he tries it; he feels nothing give under him or fade before him. Still, belief seeks fresh sustenance as a sleeper seeks a fresh side of the pillow. He may turn, and this is likely, to someone closer to him in time than Defoe in order to gratify his desire for belief (for distance of time in a novel sets up picturesqueness, hence unfamiliarity). If he should take down, for example, some book of a prolific and once esteemed novelist, like W. E. Norris, he will find that the juxtaposition of the two books brings each out more clearly.

W. E. Norris was an industrious writer who is well worth singling out for enquiry if only because he represents that vast body of forgotten novelists by whose labors fiction is kept alive in the absence of the great masters. At first, we seem to be given all that we need: girls and boys, cricket, shooting, dancing, boating, love making, marriage; a park here; a London drawing room there; here, an English gentleman; there, a cad; dinners, tea parties, canters in the Row; and, behind it all, green and gray, domestic and venerable, the fields and manor houses of England.

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Then, as one scene succeeds another, half-way through the book, we seem to have a great deal more belief on our hands than we know what to do with. We have exhausted the vividness of slang; the modernity, the adroit turn of mood. We loiter on the threshold of the scene, asking to be allowed to press a little further; we take some phrase and look at it as if it ought to yield us more. Then, turning our eyes from the main figures, we try to sketch out something in the background, to pursue these feelings and relations away from the present moment; not, needless to say, with a view to discovering some overarching conception, something which we may call "a reading of life". No, our desire is otherwise: some shadow of depth appropriate to the bulk of the figures; some Providence such as Defoe provides or morality such as he suggests, so that we can go beyond the age itself without falling into inanity.

Then, we discover it is the mark of a second-rate writer that he cannot pause here or suggest there. All his powers are strained in keeping the scene before us, its brightness and its credibility. The surface is all; there is nothing beyond.

Our capacity for belief, however, is not in the least exhausted. It is only a question of finding something that will revive it for us. Not Shakespeare and not Shelley and not Hardy; perhaps, Trollope, Swift, Maupassant. Above all, Maupassant is the most promising at the moment, for Maupassant enjoys the great advantage that he writes in French. Not from any merit of his own, he gives us that little fillip which we get from reading a language whose edges have not been smoothed for us by daily use. The very sentences shape themselves in a way that is definitely charming. The words tingle and sparkle. As for English, alas, it is *our* language—shop-worn, not so desirable, perhaps. Moreover, each of these compact little stories has its pinch of gunpowder, artfully placed so as to explode when we tread on its tail. The last words are always highly charged. Off they go, *bang,* in our faces and there is lit up for us in one uncompromising glare someone with his hand lifted, someone sneering, someone turning his back, someone catching an omnibus, as if this insignificant action, whatever it may be, summed up the whole situation forever.

The reality that Maupassant brings before us is always one of the body, of the senses—the ripe flesh of a servant girl, for example, or the succulence of food. *"Elle restait inerte, ne sentant plus son corps, et l'esprit dispersé, comme si quelqu'un l'eût d'échiqueté avec un de ces instruments dont se servent les cardeurs pour effiloquer la laine des matelas."* Or her tears dried themselves upon her cheeks *"comme des gouttes d'eau sur du fer rouge"*. It is all concrete; it is all visualized. It is a world, then, in which one can believe with one's eyes and one's nose and one's senses; nevertheless, it is a world which secretes perpetually a little drop of bitterness. Is this all? And, if this is all, is it enough? Must we, then, believe this? So we ask. Now that we are given truth unadorned, a disagreeable sensation seems attached to it, which we must analyze before we go further.

Suppose that one of the conditions of things as they are is that they are unpleasant, have we strength enough to support that unpleasantness for the sake of the delight of believing in it? Are we not shocked somehow by *Gulliver's Travels* and *Boule de Suif* and *La Maison Tellier?* Shall we not always be trying to get round the obstacle of ugliness by saying that Maupassant and his like are narrow, cynical and unimaginative when, in fact, it is their truthfulness that we resent—the fact that leeches suck the naked legs of servant girls, that there are brothels, that human nature is fundamentally cold, selfish, corrupt? This discomfort at the disagreeableness of truth is one of the first things that shakes very lightly our desire to believe. Our Anglo-Saxon blood, perhaps, has given us an instinct that truth is, if not exactly beautiful, at least pleasant or virtuous to behold. But let us

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look once more at truth and, this time, through the eyes of Anthony Trollope,* "a big, blustering, spectacled, loud voiced hunting man . . . whose language in male society was, I believe, so lurid that I was not admitted to breakfast with him . . . who rode about the country establishing penny posts, and wrote, as the story goes, so many thousand words before breakfast every day of his life".

Certainly, the Barchester Novels tell the truth, and the English truth, at first sight, is almost as plain of feature as the French truth, though with a difference. Mr. Slope is a hypocrite, with a "pawing, greasy way with him". Mrs. Proudie is a domineering bully. The Archdeacon is well-meaning but coarse grained and thick cut. Thanks to the vigor of the author, the world of which these are the most prominent inhabitants goes through its daily rigmarole of feeding and begetting children and worshipping with a thoroughness, a gusto, which leave us no loophole of escape. We believe in Barchester as we believe in the reality of our own weekly bills. Nor, indeed, do we wish to escape from the consequences of our belief, for the truth of the Slopes and the Proudies, the truth of the evening party where Mrs. Proudie has her dress torn off her back under the light of eleven gas jets, is entirely acceptable.

At the top of his bent Trollope is a big, if not first-rate novelist, and the top of his bent came when he drove his pen hard and fast after the humors of provincial life and scored, without cruelty but with hale and hearty common sense, the portraits of those well-fed, black-coated, unimaginative men and women of the 'fifties. In his manner with them, and his manner is marked, there is an admirable shrewdness, like that of a family doctor or solicitor, too well acquainted with human foibles to judge them other than tolerantly and not above the human weakness of liking one person a great deal better than another for no good reason. Indeed, though he does his best to be severe and is at his best when most so, he could not hold himself aloof, but let us know that he loved the pretty girl and hated the oily humbug so vehemently that it is only by a great pull on his reins that he keeps himself straight. It is a family party over which he presides and the reader who becomes, as time goes on, one of Trollope's most intimate cronies has a seat at his right hand. Their relation becomes confidential.

All this, of course, complicates what was simple enough in Defoe and Maupassant. There, we were plainly and straightforwardly asked to believe. Here, we are asked to believe, but to believe through the medium of Trollope's temperament and, thus, a second relationship is set up with Trollope himself which, if it diverts us, distracts us also. The truth is no longer quite so true. The clear, cold truth, which seems to lie before us unveiled in *Gulliver's Travels* and *Moll Flanders* and *La Maison Tellier,* is here garnished with a charming embroidery. But it is not from this attractive embellishment of Trollope's personality that the disease comes which in the end proves fatal to the huge, substantial, well buttressed and authenticated truth of the Barchester Novels. Truth itself, however unpleasant, is interesting always. But, unfortunately, the conditions of story telling are harsh; they demand that scene shall follow scene; that party shall be supported by another party, one parsonage by another parsonage; that all shall be of the same calibre; that the same values shall prevail. If we are told here that the palace was lit by gas, we must be told there that the manor house was faithful to the oil lamp. But what will happen if, in process of solidifying the entire body of his story, the novelist finds himself out of facts or flagging in his invention? Must he then go on? Yes, for the story has to be finished: the intrigue discovered, the guilty punished, the lovers married in the end. The record, therefore, becomes at times merely a chronicle. Truth peters out into a thin-blooded catalogue. Better would

* *Vignettes of Memory* by Lady Violet Greville.

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it be, we feel, to leave a blank or even to outrage our sense of probability than to stuff the crevices with this makeshift substance: the wrong side of truth is a worn, dull fabric, unsteeped in the waters of imagination and scorched. But the Novel has issued her orders; I consist, she says, of two and thirty chapters; and who am I, we seem to hear the sagacious and humble Trollope ask, with his usual good sense, that I should go disobeying the Novel? And he manfully provides us with makeshifts.

If, then, we reckon up what we have got from the truth-tellers, we find that it is a world where our attention is always being drawn to things which can be seen, touched and tasted, so that we get an acute sense of the reality of our physical existence. Having thus established our belief, the truth-tellers at once contrive that its solidity shall be broken before it becomes oppressive by action. Events happen; coincidence complicates the plain story. But their actions are all in keeping one with another and they are extremely careful not to discredit them or alter the emphasis in any way by making their characters other than such people as naturally express themselves to the full in active and adventurous careers. Then, again, they hold the three great powers which dominate fiction—God, Nature and Man—in stable relation so that we look at a world in proper perspective; where, moreover, things hold good not only here at the moment in front of us but, there, behind that tree or among those unknown people far away in the shadow behind those hills. At the same time, truth-telling implies disagreeableness. It is part of truth—the sting and edge of it. We cannot deny that Swift, Defoe and Maupassant all convince us that they reach a more profound depth in their ugliness than Trollope in his pleasantness. For this reason, truth-telling easily swerves a little to one side and becomes satiric. It walks beside the fact and apes it, like a shadow which is only a little more humped and angular than the object which casts it. Yet, in its perfect state, when we can believe absolutely, our satisfaction is complete. Then, we can say, though other states may exist which are better or more exalted, there is none that makes this unnecessary, none that supersedes it. But truth-telling carries in its breast a weakness which is apparent in the works of the lesser writers or in the masters themselves when they are exhausted. Truth-telling is liable to degenerate into perfunctory fact-recording, the repetition of the statement that it was on Wednesday that the Vicar held his mother's meeting which was often attended by Mrs. Brown and Miss Dobson in their pony carriage, a statement which, as the reader is quick to perceive, has nothing of truth in it but the respectable outside.

At length, then, taking into account the perfunctory fact-recording, the lack of metaphor, the plainness of the language and the fact that we believe most when the truth is most painful to us, it is not strange that we should become aware of another desire welling up spontaneously and making its way into those cracks which the great monuments of the truth-tellers wear inevitably upon their solid bases. A desire for distance, for music, for shadow, for space, takes hold of us. The dustman has picked up his broken bottle; he has crossed the road; he begins to lose solidity and detail over there in the evening dusk.

The Romantics

II

It was a November morning, and the cliffs which overlooked the ocean were hung with thick and heavy mist, when the portals of the ancient and half ruinous tower, in which Lord Ravenswood had spent the last and troubled years of his life, opened, that his mortal remains might pass forward to an abode yet more dreary and lonely.

No change could be more complete. The dustman has become a lord; the present has become the past; homely Anglo-Saxon speech has become Latin and many syllabled; in-

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stead of pots and pans, gas jets and snug broughams, we have a half ruinous tower and cliffs, the ocean and November, heavy in mist. This past and this ruin, this lord and this autumn, this ocean and this cliff are as delightful to us as the change from a close room and voices to the night and the open air. The curious softness and remoteness of the *Bride of Lammermoor,* the atmosphere of rusty moorland and splashing waves, the dark and the distance actually seem to be adding themselves to that other more truthful scene which we still hold in mind, and to be giving it completeness. After that storm this peace, after that glare this coolness. The truth-tellers had very little love, it seems, of nature. They used nature almost entirely as an obstacle to overcome or as a background to complete, not esthetically for contemplation or for any part it might play in the affairs of their characters. The town, after all, was their natural haunt. But let us compare them in more essential qualities: in their treatment of people. There comes towards us a girl tripping lightly and leaning on her father's arm:

> . . . Lucy Ashton's exquisitely beautiful, yet somewhat girlish features, were formed to express peace of mind, serenity, and indifference to the tinsel of worldly pleasure. Her locks, which were of shadowy gold, divided on a brow of exquisite whiteness, like a gleam of broken and pallid sunshine upon a hill of snow. The expression of the countenance was in the last degree gentle, soft, timid and feminine, and seemed rather to shrink from the most casual look of a stranger than to court his admiration.

Nobody could less resemble Moll Flanders or Mrs. Proudie. Lucy Ashton is incapable of action or of self-control. The bull runs at her and she sinks to the ground; the thunder peals and she faints. She falters out the strangest little language of ceremony and politeness, "O if you be a man, if you be a gentleman assist me to find my father". One might say that she has no character except the traditional; to her father she is filial; to her lover, modest; to the poor, benevolent. Compared with Moll Flanders, she is a doll with sawdust in her veins and wax in her cheeks. Yet we have read ourselves into the book and grow familiar with its proportions. We come, at length, to see that anything more individual or eccentric or marked would lay emphasis where we want none. This tapering wraith hovers over the landscape and is part of it. She and Edgar Ravenswood are needed to support this romantic world with their bare forms, to clasp it round with that theme of unhappy love which is needed to hold the rest together. But the world that they clasp has its own laws. It leaves out and eliminates no less drastically than the other. On the one hand, we have feelings of the utmost exaltation—love, hate, jealousy, remorse; on the other hand, raciness and simplicity in the extreme. The rhetoric of the Ashtons and the Ravenswoods is completed by the humors of peasants and the cackle of village women. The true romantic can swing us from earth to sky; and the great master of romantic fiction, who is undoubtedly Sir Walter Scott, uses his liberty to the full. At the same time, we retort upon this melancholy which he has called forth, as in the *Bride of Lammermoor.* We laugh at ourselves for having been so moved by machinery so absurd. However, before we impute this defect to romance itself, we must consider whether it is not Scott's fault. This lazy-minded man was quite capable when the cold fit was on him of filling a chapter or two currently, conventionally, from a fountain of empty, journalistic phrases which, for all that they have a charm of their own, let the slackened attention sag still further.

Carelessness has never been laid to the charge of Robert Louis Stevenson. He was careful, careful to a fault—a man who combined most strangely a boy's psychology with the extreme sophistication of an artist. Yet, he obeyed no less implicitly than Walter Scott the laws of romance. He lays his scene

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in the past; he is always putting his characters to the sword's point with some desperate adventure; he caps his tragedy with homespun humor. Nor can there be any doubt that his conscience and his seriousness as a writer have stood him in good stead. Take any page of *The Master of Ballantrae* and it still stands wear and tear; but the fabric of the *Bride of Lammermoor* is full of holes and patches; it is scamped, botched, hastily flung together. Here, in Stevenson, romance is treated seriously and given all the advantages of the most refined literary art, with the result that we are never left to consider what an absurd situation this is or to reflect that we have no emotion left with which to meet the demand made upon us. We get, on the contrary, a firm, credible story, which never betrays us for a second but is corroborated, substantiated, made good in every detail. With what precision and cunning a scene will be made visible to us as if the pen were a knife which sliced away the covering and left the core bare!

> It was as he said: there was no breath stirring; a windless stricture of frost had bound the air; and as we went forth in the shine of the candles, the blackness was like a roof over our heads.

Or, again:

> All the 27th that rigorous weather endured: a stifling cold; folk passing about like smoking chimneys; the wide hearth in the hall piled high with fuel; some of the spring birds that had already blundered north into our neighbourhood besieging the windows of the house or trotting on the frozen turf like things distracted.

"A windless stricture of frost . . . the folk passing about like smoking chimneys"—one may search the Waverley Novels in vain for such close writing as this. Separately, these descriptions are lovely and brilliant. The fault lies elsewhere, in the whole of which they are a part. For in those critical minutes which decide a book's fate, when it is finished and the book swims up complete in the mind and lets us look at it, something seems lacking. Perhaps it is that the detail sticks out too prominently. The mind is caught up by this fine passage of description, by that curious exactitude of phrase; but the rhythm and sweep of emotion which the story has started in us are denied satisfaction. We are plucked back when we should be swinging free. Our attention is caught by some knot of ribbon or refinement of tracery when in fact we desire only a bare body against the sky.

Scott repels our taste in a thousand ways. But the crisis, that is the point where the accent falls and shapes the book under it, is right. Slouching, careless as he is, he will at the critical moment pull himself together and strike the one stroke needed, the stroke which gives the book its vividness in memory. Lucy sits gibbering "couched like a hare upon its form". "So, you have ta'en up your bonnie bridegroom?" she says, dropping her fine lady's mincing speech for the vernacular. Ravenswood sinks beneath the quicksands. "One only vestige of his fate appeared. A large sable feather had been detached from his hat, and the rippling waves of the rising tide wafted it to Caleb's feet. The old man took it up, dried it, and placed it in his bosom." At both these points the writer's hand is on the book and it falls from him shaped. But in *The Master of Ballantrae,* though each detail is right and wrought so as separately to move our highest admiration, there is no such final consummation. What should have gone to help it seems, in retrospect, to stand apart from it. We remember the detail, but not the whole. Lord Durisdeer and the Master die together but we scarcely notice it. Our attention has been frittered away elsewhere.

It would seem that the romantic spirit is an exacting one; if it sees a man crossing the road in the lamplight and then lost in the gloom of the evening, it at once dictates what course the writer must pursue. We do not wish, it will say, to know much about him. We desire that he shall express our capacity

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for being noble and adventurous; that he shall dwell among wild places and suffer the extremes of fortune; that he be endowed with youth and distinction and allied with moors, winds and wild birds. He is, moreover, to be a lover, not in a minute, introspective way, but largely and in outline. His feelings must be part of the landscape; the shallow browns and blues of distant woods and harvest fields are to enter into them; a tower, perhaps, and a castle where the snapdragon flowers. Above all, the romantic spirit demands here a crisis and there a crisis in which the wave that has swollen in the breast shall break. Such feelings Scott gratifies more completely than Stevenson, though with enough qualification to make us pursue the question of romance and its scope and its limitations a little further. Perhaps here it might be interesting to read *The Mysteries of Udolpho.*

The Mysteries of Udolpho have been so much laughed at as the type of Gothic absurdity that it is difficult to come at the book with a fresh eye. We come, expecting to ridicule. Then, when we find beauty, as we do, we go to the other extreme and rhapsodize. But the beauty and the absurdity of romance are both present and the book is a good test of the romantic attitude, since Mrs. Radcliffe pushes the liberties of romance to the extreme. Where Scott will go back a hundred years to get the effect of distance, Mrs. Radcliffe will go back three hundred. With one stroke, she frees herself from a host of disagreeables and enjoys her freedom lavishly.

As a novelist, it is her desire to describe scenery and it is there that her great gift lies. Like every true writer, she shoulders her way past every obstacle to her goal. She brings us into a huge, empty, airy world. A few ladies and gentlemen, who are purely Eighteenth Century in mind, manner and speech, wander about in vast champaigns, listen to nightingales singing amorously in midnight woods; see the sun set over the lagoons of Venice; and watch the distant Alps turn pink and blue from the turrets of an Italian castle.

These people, when they are well born, are of the same blood as Scott's gentry; attenuated and formal silhouettes who have the same curious power of being in themselves negligible and insipid but of merging harmoniously in the design.

Again, we feel the force which the romantic acquires by obliterating facts. With the sinking of the lights, the solidity of the foreground disappears, other shapes become apparent and other senses are roused. We become aware of the danger and darkness of our existence; comfortable reality has proved itself a phantom too. Outside our little shelter we hear the wind raging and the waves breaking. In this mood our senses are strained and apprehensive. Noises are audible which we should not hear normally. Curtains rustle. Something in the semi-darkness seems to move. Is it alive? And what is it? And what is it seeking here? Mrs. Radcliffe succeeds in making us feel all this, largely because she is able to make us aware of the landscape and, thus, induces a detached mood favorable to romance; but in her, more plainly than in Scott or Stevenson, the absurdity is evident, the wheels of the machine are visible and the grinding is heard. She lets us see clearly more than they do what demands the romantic writer makes upon us.

Both Scott and Stevenson, with the true instinct of the imagination, introduced rustic comedy and broad Scots dialect. It is in that direction, as they rightly divined, that the mind will unbend when it relaxes. Mrs. Radcliffe, on the other hand, having climbed to the top of her pinnacle, finds it impossible to come down. She tries to solace us with comic passages, put naturally into the mouths of Annette and Ludovico who are servants. But the break is too steep for her limited and ladylike mind and she pieces out her high moments and her beautiful atmosphere with a pale reflection of romance which is more tedious than any ribaldry. Mysteries abound. Murdered bodies multiply; but she is incapable of creating the emotion to feel them by,

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with the result that they lie there, unbelieved in; hence, ridiculous. The veil is drawn; there is the concealed figure; there is the decayed face; there are the writhing worms—and we laugh.

Directly the power which lives in a book sinks, the whole fabric of the book, its sentences, the length and shape of them, its inflections, its mannerisms, all that it wore proudly and naturally under the impulse of a true emotion become stale, forced, unappetizing. Mrs. Radcliffe slips limply into the faded Scott manner and reels off page after page in a style illustrated by this example:

> Emily, who had always endeavoured to regulate her conduct by the nicest laws, and whose mind was finely sensible, not only of what is just in morals, but of whatever is beautiful in the feminine character, was shocked by these words.

And so it slips along and so we sink and drown in the pale tide. Nevertheless, Udolpho passes this test: it gives us an emotion which is both distinct and unique, however high or low we rate the emotion itself.

If we see now where the danger of romance lies: how difficult the mood is to sustain; how it needs the relief of comedy; how the very distance from common human experience and strangeness of its elements become ridiculous—if we see these things, we see also that these emotions are in themselves priceless jewels. The romantic novel realizes for us an emotion which is deep and genuine. Scott, Stevenson, Mrs. Radcliffe, all in their different ways, unveil another country of the land of fiction; and it is not the least proof of their power that they breed in us a keen desire for something different.

(*to be continued*)

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ELLEN GLASGOW AND THE SOUTH

by Sara Haardt

THE revolutionary aspects of the literary movement in the South during the past decade must have given a great deal of quiet amusement to a very lovely lady in Richmond, Virginia, who, fully fifteen years before the first revolutionary poets and professors were distinguishable, was writing novels that viewed with an unprecedented realism every aspect of southern character. Even in *The Battle-Ground,* published in 1902, her novel of manners placed in the Civil War, there were passages that would have set the young revolutionaries to thinking, if they had been thinking or reading the realistic novels of the period. But throughout the South there was not an answering echo. It was the same with *Virginia,* that devastating portrait of the southern-Victorian gentlewoman, published eleven years later, and *Life and Gabriella* and *One Man in His Time,* purposeful and revealing novels of the transition period through which the South was muddling. It is a fact, of course, that the South has seldom been aware of its writers and, almost never, influenced by them. But in Ellen Glasgow were certain qualities, so southern in their origin and sympathies, that it seems the strangest of all paradoxes peculiar to that temperamental region that she was not acclaimed by the young *revoltés* as the most kindred of the pioneer liberating spirits.

She has, first of all, that uncompromising courage, an attitude of life rather than a heroic necessity, that the South has always admired in its leaders. Fundamentally, she believes the same things today that she believed when she first started writing—when she first started thinking. In essence, the irony of *The Romantic Comedians* is the irony of her first piece, "A Lonely Daisy in a Garden of Roses"; the philosophy of *Barren Ground* is the philosophy of *The Descendant;* the realism of *Virginia* is the realism of her really first book, *Sharp Realities,* which she destroyed. She has not, like most modern southerners, suffered the humiliation of a conversion to new ideas—she has held the same ideas from the beginning; and, according to a once inviolable southern tradition, she has fought for them as gallantly.

Yet, as fearlessly unconventional as she is in thought, she is as precisely and as uncompromisingly conventional in manner. Unlike the *revoltés* of a later era, she has never raised her voice; she has never assumed an erratic gesture; she has never dramatized her philosophical or her poetical creeds. In the Victorian twilight of Richmond, when it seemed as unbecoming for a lady to think as to affect knickers, she wore her blue ribbons and her air of secret wisdom with as charming a grace as those other charming ladies whose earnest inquiries began and ended with such fundamental verities as the superiority of man and the aristocratic supremacy of the Episcopal Church. In a later day, when it actually became the fashion for ladies of

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intellectual attainments—especially those who supported woman's suffrage—to assume a bolder speech matched with an equally emboldened personality, she still preserved an air of luminous mystery, of almost decorous composure. Today, despite the fact of her complete unorthodoxy, despite the fact that she has achieved the most completely realistic portraits of a southern-Victorian gentlewoman and of a southern gentleman ever written, she is the most perfectly conventional—and the most charming of southern ladies.

I saw her first in the perfect setting of her old Virginian house, a house of shadowy gray stone, overgrown with ivy and wistaria and half-concealed behind box and magnolia trees. There was an old-fashioned iron fence shutting in the yard with an air of encircling warmth, a worn brick walk and a flight of high stone steps leading to a columned portico overhung with trailing vines. Past the gate a heavy traffic was rumbling over the uneven bricks of Main Street but, about the small porch, there was a deep, enveloping serenity and, although it was September, it seemed to me I caught the dreamy fragrance of a late Cape jasmine. Suddenly, as the door opened, I had an impression of bright spaciousness, of tall ceilings, a wide hall and a wide staircase, doors that opened into drawing-rooms with gleaming mirrors and old mahogany—I remember, with a strangely sharp clarity, a Chinese Chippendale chair upholstered in a flaming brocade, a thing of flawless beauty, and, above it, two silhouettes on the farther wall. . . . Then I found myself in a great room lined with books, with the light slanting down from the tall windows, the incense of spiced rose leaves and a log of burning cedar in the air. Before me, silhouetted against the light, stood a small, exquisite woman. She had dark eyes, a mass of bronze hair and features of a cameo-like delicacy, but these details seemed merely a happy accident in the glow of her enchanting femininity. She wore a dress of vibrant blue and little high-heeled blue slippers.

II

Her charm, it seemed to me, as I watched her against that old-world background, was that she subtly embodied the feminine ideals of two contrasting eras: she is romantic in feeling and yet fatalistic in philosophy; she is uncompromising and yet gentle; exquisite and yet intrepid. In a very real sense, she has the quaint grace of the Victorian era together with its indestructible dignity but, spiritually, she is as far removed from it as she is from the shackling ideals of the modern Fundamentalist South. The Victorian age is a romantic period to write about, she says, but a dreadful time to have lived in; for her own part, she is deeply thankful for living in the present era. Nevertheless, because she *did* live in it her analysis of human frailties, especially of human hypocrisies, has an underlying sagacity so subtle, so peculiarly feminine in its penetration, that it seems the distilled wisdom of all feminine experience. In essence, of course, it is realistic, as the veiled observations of those Victorian ladies were realistic, but it is clothed in a form so graceful and so ornamental that it has the wholly disarming effect of beauty.

In reality, Ellen Glasgow has invariably been as much preoccupied with form as with subject-matter; almost instinctively, when she proclaimed a discordant truth she stated it in sonorous prose, a prose that somehow disguised the fact that it was harsh and anathema. In her brilliantly epigrammatic style many of her most acidulous commentaries have had a universal rather than a personal challenge. Whether she meant it to be so or not, the way she expressed a thing, rather than the thing itself, is what impressed her audiences and, however inverted or contraverted, this is a Victorianism certainly.

This fact of a beautiful, rather than an economical, style must explain her curious neglect as one of the first of the realistic school of southern writers. She gave voice, for instance, to the secret rebellion of the

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southern gentlewoman of the late Victorian era before there was an intimation of the present woman movement. "If every woman told the truth to herself," she demanded in *Virginia,* "would she say that there is something in her which love has not reached?" . . . Virginia herself was drawn with a mingled irony and pity that made her misgivings, her vague reaching out of the dream for the reality, all the more tragically futile. This is true to an even greater extent of old Judge Honeywell in *The Romantic Comedians.* It is not because she reveals her characters as pitiful but because she pities them that they have such an intimate reality and, undoubtedly, they have more reality for her when they seem most unhappy or suffering or struggling. Dorinda, in *Barren Ground,* was a memorable figure while she was struggling miserably. Later, when success crowned her efforts, when she achieved her ennobled calm and prosperity, she seemed to dwindle visibly as a human figure. It is equally true of Gabriella in *Life and Gabriella,* Dan Lightfoot in *The Battle-Ground,* Michael Akershem in *The Descendant* and of all her characters who seem to attain a modicum of human happiness, even momentarily. But it is never true of those tragically heroic and defeated souls, Virginia and Judge Honeywell, or of Virginia's later counterpart, Amanda Lightfoot. Likewise, it is never true of those innumerable minor feminine characters that fill her pages, women from every stratum of southern life, gentlewomen and seamstresses, shop-women and boarding-house mistresses, teachers and ministers' wives, gay ladies and innocent, plastic young girls, celibate Miss Priscillas and ambitious striving Mrs. Upchurches, domineering old mammies and bright satin-skinned mulatto girls. . . .

The truth is that Ellen Glasgow views all women as inevitably oppressed and inevitably tragic, especially those half-legendary gentlewomen of the Victorian era, and, because sympathy for the oppressed has always been her most elemental feeling, she divines them the more plainly. "I should have pitied them," she sighs in her tenderest voice, "if for no other reason than that they have had to wait for so long. The Victorian era, above all, was one of waiting, as hell is an eternity of waiting. Women waiting for the first words of love from their lovers. Women waiting, with all the inherited belief in the omnipotence of love, for the birth of their sons. Women waiting, during the Civil War, for news of their sons, their husbands from First Manassas, Gettysburg, the Wilderness. Women waiting beside the beds of the sick and dying—waiting—waiting——. As a result, I think it is almost impossible to overestimate the part that religion, in one form or another, has played in the lives of southern women. Nothing else could have kept them in their place for so many generations: it is the only power that could have made them accept with meekness the wing of the chicken and the double standard of morals."

Ellen Glasgow herself has never derived any comfort or any illusion from the spiritual slaving of women. Even as a child, when her father asked her what she thought of the sermon upon her first attendance at the eleven o'clock service, she replied, positively, "Well, father, he wouldn't let me answer back!" . . . "At that time," she says now, "I thought the only way to worship God was on a mountain, with or without a blanket, and at a safe distance from most professing Christians. I observed, even then, that if only you could persuade earnest believers to come out of doors, they lost the pious ferocity which has made religious wars the most terrible in history and present politics in the South the most diverting to watch at a proper distance from the mud slinging and brickbats."

Her religion, if she can be said to have any, is a kind of philosophy of beauty. It is important, she believes, to love beauty as an artist rather than as a lover or a sentimentalist. She loves, in particular, the beauty of trees and of words—the trees of England and New

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England, of Brittany and Lombardy and the Rhine country and of her own Virginia: the old lindens in the churchyards of Richmond, the long rows of elms on Franklin Street, with a web of sunlight and shadow caught in their lacy branches, the tall, dark magnolias in her garden with their great, white blossoms and sacrificial perfume. As trees are her chief delight, words are her chief preoccupation; they have for her shape, color and feeling. They have outlived for her all the joys and the sorrows and the ancient disillusionments of life.

Her work, in reality, has not been her preoccupation only—it is her escape as well. She was born mentally detached from her surroundings, but the Virginia of her girlhood, despite its provincial charm, was so inalienable a part of the Victorian order from which she was spiritually in revolt that she was compelled by a more urgent effort of her will to escape into a world of her own making—a world as remote and fantastic in comparison as the realm of Poictesme, with whose romantic fastnesses another famous Virginian was consoling himself.

III

Ellen Glasgow was born in Richmond, Virginia, in the middle seventies, and she has lived there in her old, gray house almost the whole of her life. Within its ivied walls, all of her books except *Life and Gabriella,* which was written in New York, first saw the light of day. It was in one of the big rooms upstairs that she sat before the fire at night with her old mammy as a child, telling stories of "Little Willie", a living character whom she dramatized in an endless series of adventures. She has dreamed of writing ever since she can remember.

Following the evenings with her mammy, after she had grown older, she used to sit with her Aunt Rebecca, a typical Victorian gentlewoman, who told her stories from the Bible and Sir Walter Scott. They were charming evenings, with the firelight throwing shadows on the high ceiling, the house very still and a fugitive glow upon Aunt Rebecca's pale cheeks. In the long silence, after her gentle voice had stopped, Ellen Glasgow began her own imaginings of other radiant ladies and knights: she was already secretly at work upon a story. At the age of eight she copied it painstakingly in her tall round hand, "A Lonely Daisy in a Garden of Roses". Despite all the romances she had heard from the lips of gentle Aunt Rebecca, despite the sweetly confirmed sentiments which she had heard from the lips of her other Victorian kinswomen who had disciplined her from birth, despite the inheritance of a grandmother who had lain in the center of her big four-poster bed between lavender-scented sheets, night after night, reading *The Mysteries of Udolpho* propped against a tall silver candlestick on her breast —despite all this, the first words that Ellen Glasgow wrote were a brave attempt at realism.

From that time on, she wrote incessantly. For a few months every year she attended a private school, but she disliked it so intensely her mother took her away and arranged for her to finish her education at home. She was really educated in an old English or, rather, an old Virginian library. She read everything within reach and remembered everything, her small head with its clustering bronze curls bent low over the page, often making notes along the margins in her clear, round hand. Having once exhausted its shelves, she joined the Mercantile Library and as thoroughly abstracted the volumes of its lists.

She smiles today as she recalls the intellectual phases through which she struggled so seriously. She had her Keats and Shelley and Browning period, as did all the young ladies of the day—though she has always read a great deal of poetry; her romantic period with the Waverley Novels; her realistic period with Balzac, Maupassant and the great Russians, particularly Tolstoy and Dos-

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toievski; her socialistic period with John Stuart Mill and Saint-Simon and William Morris; her scientific and philosophical periods with Darwin, Haeckel, Hume, Berkeley, Royce, Spencer, Plato, Buddha, Aristotle, Huxley, Bacon, all the mystics. By the time she was past her middle twenties, she had progressed with a growing solitariness from the evasive idealism of the sentimental tradition through the equally evasive dogmatism of the redeeming philosophies. During the while, when she was absorbing theories more rapidly than she could explore them, she wrote out her socialistic illusions in *The Descendant, Phases of an Inferior Planet* and *The Voice of the People.* She was too young to realize that the oppressed do not remain oppressed; if they remained so, she remarks (with what she describes as the seasoned wisdom of platitude) they would be a safe academic question. Of all her enthusiasms, only two became consequent literary influences: Tolstoy and Maupassant. *War and Peace* remains for her the greatest novel ever written.

At sixteen, the same year she wrote her first book, *Sharp Realities,* she came out at the St. Cecilia ball in Charleston. I can see her as she must have looked then, a radiant figure in a white organdie with blue ribbons, her hair still in curls, a single rose pinned in the fichu of her dress. Later, she was formally presented in Richmond. According to the fashion, she spent her summers at White Sulphur Springs. When she was eighteen she went to New York to hear opera and stayed with a southern lady who chaperoned her severely. She spent three weeks with her and upon one memorable occasion—at her urgent request—her chaperon permitted an elderly gentleman of unimpeachable progenitors to take her to dinner in what was then called a Bohemian restaurant.

From this evening *The Descendant* came into her mind. It sprang entirely from her imagination. Actually, she wrote a Bohemian novel of New York without ever going out unchaperoned. When it was published three years later, so untrammelled did it seem that it was believed to be the work of Harold Frederic, author of *The Damnation of Theron Ware!* "My book was very young and crude," she says in her spirited voice, ". . . all I can say of it is that I honestly (and with a struggle that appears ridiculous to me today tried, at eighteen, to break away from the fetters of the sentimental tradition."

During the time she was at work upon *The Descendant,* her mother died. She was the only person who had faith in her gifts and, in her despairing sorrow, Ellen Glasgow put her book aside for more than a year. The theme did not change, but she feels that the character of her writing must have altered. Afterward, her elder sister, Cary McCormack, filled her mother's place. Indeed, from that time on, she alone was her literary inspiration. Mrs. McCormack died in 1911 when Ellen Glasgow was writing *The Miller of Old Church.* She was "the radiant spirit" to whom she dedicated *Virginia.*

After she had finished *The Descendant* and it had been accepted, she waited long months for it to be published. If only she had one book published, she whispered over and over to herself, she could die from happiness. "I've had seventeen published," she says now with her impregnable irony, "and I have never been happy and have not died."

IV

The ironical fact is that Ellen Glasgow is no happier in the Virginia of the modern, industrial South than she was in the Virginia of the orthodox Victorian era. She has, essentially, the charm of one and the sophistication of the other, but she belongs to neither —she is one of those strangely romantic figures of transition periods who stand superbly alone, who can view with a perfect equanimity the prejudices of the past or the foibles of the future, but who inevitably must suffer a great loneliness. The only art that has ever

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succeeded in the South, she declares, is the art of hypocrisy: there never has existed an intellectual society. The southerner learned to read, to write and to preach before he learned to think—there was, indeed, no need for thinking when everybody thought alike or, rather, when to think differently meant to be ostracized. His charm always has been that he could talk more and know less than any other American.

The peculiar charm of the Old South was that it not only knew how to live but to *let* live. What distinguished the southerner, and particularly the Virginian, from his severer neighbors to the north was his ineradicable belief that pleasure was worth more than toil, that it was worth more even than profit. His life, like the beauty that adorned it, depended less upon the truth of an outline than it did upon the softening quality of an atmosphere. If it was lacking in intellectual pursuits, it was immeasurably charming in manner and gallantry and picturesqueness; to have known its genial urbanity was to cherish it forever.

What little remained of the Old South, the World War scattered like autumn leaves but, with these remaining traditions, Ellen Glasgow is irrevocably bound. Her house stands away to the southwest of Richmond, along with a few other old places, defiantly facing both the business and slums of the new industrialism. There, in spring, the air is sweet with the perfume of lilacs and hyacinths and jasmine from the old garden, framed in its flowering shrubs. Later, when summer suns have burned the more delicate blossoms, the great rose-colored crêpe myrtles burst into bloom more riotously than ever. But behind her high protecting garden wall, there is a sense of the ever-threatening present, of the widening spread of expressionless concrete, floridly indistinguishable buildings and new-world estates.

In a great room upstairs, the walls bright with rows of books and the gay red roofs of farmhouses in the charming French wall-paper, Ellen Glasgow writes through the mornings and long afternoons. There are a few deep chairs, an old mahogany desk, its drawers bulging with yellowed papers and photographs, a deep fireplace and a mantel-shelf on which are several of the tiny Staffordshire and Chelsea dogs from her collection. As in most workrooms, there is an air of timelessness, as if each object stood firmly rooted in an inviolable past. Yet, even here, there is that overwhelming sense of change. It has oppressed her, even with the indestructible beauty of the Virginia seasons filling her wide windows, and caused her to view, with the mystically clear eyes of danger, "the program of progress" of the democratized South.

She has seen, first of all, that the modern southerner is no more enlightened as the servant of patriotic materialism than the old southerner was as the servant of the sentimental tradition. The southern mind today is synonymous with the Fundamentalist mind, and the pity is that this is true, not only in education but in living. Whereas the old southerner was a conformist in his beliefs and politics but a picturesque libertarian in his manner of living, the southerner of the new era is a strict conformist in both. Commercial activity and industrial development have their uses, no doubt, in any well established society; but there is a grave danger that the modern South, with its natural gift for adaptability, will lose its individuality by conforming to the accepted American pattern of standardization and mass production.

For the southern artist, of course, this has serious consequences. In the midst of a noisy civilization that is steadily reducing life to a level of comfortable mediocrity, he is not only liable to forget but to distrust the heroic legend of the Old South. Consciously or unconsciously, he is likely to surrender to the standards of utility in art and fundamentalism in ideas. There is, at the moment, a literary movement afoot that, by some subtle process of reaction, is producing a literature of revolt but there is, even more significantly,

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an almost pathetic confusion of purpose in the rising generation.

It is a curious paradox that Ellen Glasgow, who first achieved a revolt from the debased romantic tradition of the Victorian era, should today be forced into a position to resurrect the true romantic tradition and defend it as gallantly against the embattled young *revoltés* of a later period. "The South," she reminds them, "has a finer heritage from which to draw than any other section of the country. The whole fabric of living is richer; it has depth and a tragic past, and a gay and gallant pessimism. If the present literary movement shall develop an art rather than an industry, it will value such material as a genuine revelation of beauty which, however neglected or transmuted, is most expressive of the Southern mind and heart; it will absorb light and inspiration from its own nature rather than sacrifice it for a standard utilitarian style."

Unlike most of these later artists who have fled the inhospitable air of the revolutionized South, Ellen Glasgow has continued to live and to write in Richmond. In years past, she has travelled a great deal, but her travels, even though she delighted in them, have never influenced her writing. She likes to recall now, in quiet moments, the rocky coasts of Maine with their restless, seething waves and the golden, strangely remote air of Egypt; and, she says, of all places she has ever visited, she would like to end her days in an old New England farmhouse, very low on the ground, with gnarled apple trees on the hillside, lilac bushes under the windows and tiger lilies and tall, bright, green grass growing close to the doorstep.

Actually, however, she seems to belong to no other place so much as in her native Virginia in the old, gray house reminiscent today of all that was charming and spacious in a vanished past. I like to recall her there, as I last saw her, in the glowing dusk of her library, amid the old books, the steel engraving of the "Burial of Latane" and the dim fragrance of roses.

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THE DESK

by Edwin Seaver

For twenty years Miss Butler had been a good and faithful servant to the Company and then one day they changed the position of her desk. This was quite a blow to Miss Butler; she was all broken up about it. Why, heavens! Then seniority counted for nothing with the Company if twenty years' service couldn't even insure your place in the office. If they could do that sort of thing they could do anything!

"Not much they can't," Miss Butler said, "no, sir, not with me they can't. Oh, I know Mr. Renzler didn't do it purposely. I know he meant well enough and all that. I know he thought it improved the looks of the office to have my desk changed to the side of the room. But I was with the Company when he was still running around with his shirt out, see, and I'm not going to be shown my place by him now, no, sir, not if I know it. Either my desk goes back to where it was or I hand in my resignation, yes, sir!"

Miss Butler drew the long hatpins out of her bonnet emphatically and removed her coat. Then she hung her coat carefully on the hanger that had her name printed in India ink on it and hung her hat on the hook that had always been reserved for her as long as anybody in the office could remember. Proceeding gravely from the clothes rack to her desk, she took out a large piece of cheesecloth from the lower drawer and began to flick off the last particles of dust left on her desk top by the scrubwomen the night before. Miss Butler had been doing this the first thing in the morning now for twenty years because she always said cleanliness was next to godliness but this morning she scourged the dust from her desk extra-seriously to control the righteous anger welling up in her.

Everybody in the office appreciated how Miss Butler felt about her desk being changed that way. They tried to be very nice to her though they knew she never really meant what she said about resigning. She was a tiresome old maid, she could drive you crazy, once she started giving her opinion about anything and everything, and she dressed a fright, but she really meant well enough and had a good heart. She was proud of her long service with the Company, she was proud of her education, too, and belonged to a discussion group and read *The Literary Digest* and *The Forum* regularly because she always believed in keeping up on current affairs. She had once been a school teacher; so, after all, she couldn't really help it if she argued all morning about a misplaced comma or the only proper way to end a business letter. That was the way she was. That was all.

"Mr. Renzler's really an awfully nice man," everybody in the office explained to Miss Butler, "he would never do a thing like that purposely. It's only because he's new with the Company and doesn't know how we take such things here that he did it. As soon as he comes in this morning you just go right up to him and tell him how you feel about it. He'll

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put your desk back where it was without a word, you see.'"

"Oh, I'll tell him about it, all right," Miss Butler said, "don't you worry about that. I've been with the Company too long not to know my place in this office by now."

Folding up the cheesecloth carefully, Miss Butler returned it to the bottom drawer of her desk and closed the drawer with a bang. Then she took out her spectacle case from the deep pocket in her skirt, removed her glasses and a little pink cloth and, clicking the case shut decisively, began to polish the shining lenses.

Anybody could see how worked up Miss Butler was about what had happened to her desk—her hand trembled so as she wiped her glasses—but nobody could know what her desk really meant to Miss Butler. She was passionately attached to it. In her twenty years' service with the Company it had come to mean for her the visible symbol of her important position with that great organization. Friends died away and forgot her, ideas perished and opinions withered and blew away with a change of wind; the desk alone remained, image of the Company which did not so much employ her as exist for her, a haven of security and permanence in a world where nothing was secure, nothing permanent.

When Miss Butler first came with the Company her desk was the one nearest the door and often she would have to get up herself and close the heavy window or the transom to stop the draught. Draughts always gave her a cold. It took Miss Butler five years to get out of the draught and when, at the end of that time, an older employé left the Company, she took his place, taking her desk with her. Four times in the next ten years similar changes had occurred and each time Miss Butler had advanced with her desk triumphantly towards the window where the office manager's handsome roll-top mahogany desk resided, firm-planted as the rock of ages. So it was that, by her fifteenth year with the Company, Miss Butler's desk was second to none in the office but the manager's and there she had abided in happy contentment until a new manager had come in and upset everything. No wonder, then, Miss Butler took it so badly to have her desk changed that way without so much as a by-your-leave. If that could happen, anything could happen.

It was no use trying to work. Miss Butler tried to work because she always believed in disciplining your mind and not letting your emotions get the better of you, but she just couldn't keep her mind on anything this morning. She felt out of place, miserable. What was the use of working at all if this sort of thing could happen to you right out of a clear sky? You worked hard all your life trying to get somewhere and be somebody but a lot of good it did you. Nobody cared what you did.

Miss Butler suddenly resented the banging of the typewriters about her and the empty chatter of the young men and women who worked in the office with her. They were not thinking of her any more. They had only been nice to her to quiet her—that was all—and suddenly she felt chilled and lonely and she knew she was old. It was no use deluding herself any more; things had changed completely since she had come with the Company. The Company had grown enormously in those twenty years and she was nothing now but an old cog in a well oiled machine. She could get out but the machine would go on just the same. There were thousands of young men and women just graduating from college who were waiting for a chance to take her place at thirty dollars a week. That was why they were so nice to her, all of them. They knew she would never resign; she could not. They laughed at her up their sleeves whenever she said she was going to resign. You had to humor an old fogy like her about her desk; that was all. White collars they called themselves now and sneered at anyone who believed in his job and in the Company. They didn't know the meaning of service.

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The dust that had been gathering for twenty years on Miss Butler's soul blew about disconsolately in the parched wind and settled again, unhappy. Why didn't Mr. Renzler come? It was half-past nine already. Other managers didn't take such liberties about coming to work whenever they pleased. She couldn't stand this sitting around waiting much longer and so she decided to go to the ladies' room to make the time move faster. Placing her spectacles on the desk Miss Butler arose and went out of the office. She knew they were winking behind her back; she could feel it in her bones. Let them.

When she had closed the door behind her Miss Butler did not go directly to the ladies' room. She remained close to the door to hear what she could hear.

"Poor Miss Butler," Miss Perkins said.

"Not much they couldn't, no, sir, not with me they can't," said Mr. Nash, imitating Miss Butler's dry dogmatic voice.

Everybody in the office giggled to hear him take off Miss Butler so well.

"Oh, say," Miss Perkins said, "I guess you wouldn't feel so good if you were an old maid like her and had given your whole life to this dump."

"God forbid," Mr. Nash said. "She couldn't give herself anywhere else, I guess."

"Oh, Mr. Nash," Miss Perkins said.

"Oh, Miss Perkins," Mr. Nash said.

Miss Butler had a good mind to go right in again and show them right up to their faces, the fresh things. But then, what was the use? You would expect that sort of thing of them. They were that kind.

Strengthened in her contempt of them, Miss Butler relinquished the doorknob and walked briskly down the long corridor toward the ladies' room.

As she was passing the elevators reserved for executives, a car drew up to the landing and who should step out but J. P.? J. P. was not his real name; his real name was James Putnam Porter, the second, but everybody on the floor called him J. P. for short. Mr. Porter was a very important man, he was really one of the biggest executives of the Company, and he said good morning very cordially to Miss Butler and actually remembered her name.

"Good morning, sir," Miss Butler said in her most educated voice.

Just then Mr. Nash passed by with some papers and said, "Good morning, sir," to Mr. Porter, too, but J. P. didn't even so much as glance in his direction.

Suddenly happier, Miss Butler watched after Mr. Porter, waddling down the hallway and pushing his protuberant belly before him. At that moment she would have liked to run after him and kiss the back of his neck where the red flesh hung down over the white collar.

When Miss Butler returned from the ladies' room, Mr. Renzler was already seated at his desk. Miss Butler had to admit he was really quite a fine man. He said he was very sorry her desk had been moved that way, he apologized to her; he had never told the men to move it and they would have to put it back where it was before, that was all.

Miss Butler thanked him very much but Mr. Renzler laughed and said, "Not at all," he wanted everybody in the office to be happy. "They were all one big family in the office," he said.

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MR. MORE AND THE GENTLE READER

by G. R. Elliott

Not long ago a periodical article gave vent to a confident but rather cryptic opinion upon Paul Elmer More. In effect, it was this: Mr. More is a very distinguished critic, but he is not pertinent to our age. No irony was intended against "our age" which, indeed, the writer of the article identified with his own. He did not stop to reflect that pertinency is ambidextrous and that "our age", in finding "a very distinguished critic" not pertinent to it, might prove itself impertinent to him. Nevertheless, my conviction is that in recent years we have been insensibly drawing closer to More's position, that his work has for us a heightening pertinency which needs just now to be clearly seen and admitted. But, first, let us face this question: why is it that so far he has been treated by "our age" with even more reluctance or hostility than has usually fallen to the lot of a "very distinguished critic"?

Certainly he is among the leading critics in the English language; let us say, for the sake of safety and conciliation, among the leading dozen. Just as certainly, none of the other eleven in their day and generation has made less appeal to the "gentle reader". This term is out of date but the personage himself is still with us. In a way, he is more numerous than ever. He may be, for example, a balancing academic who feels that Mr. More is much too decided, perhaps too narrow and unsympathetic, certainly too much addicted to critical categories and labels; who, for his own part, heartily dislikes labels but innocently wears the label of Matthew Arnold, still trying to see life vaguely and see it whole. Or, he may be a vital onrusher, devoted to what he calls "life"; heartily disliking academics, but too "gentle" in his power of mental discrimination to perceive the gulf that divides More from them. Or he may be. . . But, enough! The plain fact is that More is an extraordinarily severe thinker who has come at a time when severity of thought, in the field of literature, is extraordinarily out of fashion.

Indiscrimination, intellectual softness, pervades our literary atmosphere like nitrogen. We have learned to breathe it unaware. The situation is quite climactic. During the past two centuries intellectual severity has gone over more and more from literature into science. This process has culminated in our age. Literature today is nebulae in the outskirts of the solid-seeming universe of science. Our literature is soft, soft.

We do not like to admit this fact in all its blankness, for the instinct of the human army is to conceal its losses. We have wished to believe that there is something primitively vigorous in the jets of feeling and runlets of fancy that flow so quaintly in our characteristic writings. Thus, our luckless poets and novelists have been encouraged to cultivate an over-strained style, unique in the history of literature and destined for the laughter of future generations. In particular,

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a smoky imagery of sex, soft, acrid and voluminous, has been poured forth to conceal the trivial fire of passion in the green veins of our authors. Perhaps never before have such authors been treated by reviewers and readers so gently. Our aversion to the term "gentle reader" is, in psychological parlance, a defense mechanism. We suppress the term because the thing itself has got into our very marrow and we are subconsciously ashamed of it. We are, but do not wish to appear, extremely gentle readers.

Well, Mr. More insists we are. In one way or another, for a quarter of a century he has relentlessly uncovered our secret knowledge of our literary and spiritual softness. He has not been tactful about it. Perhaps no important critic in the past has been equally lacking in the art of conciliating current readers. He is devoid of even the most innocent flatteries. One reason for this is his extreme personal modesty as a writer. For example, classic ideas that other modern critics have suavely given forth as their own are carefully assigned by More to classic authors. He has made echo eloquent and the reviewers hoarse with repetition of his Plato's name even while quietly shaping forth a deeply original Platonism answering to a central modern need. Other critics, in rediscovering and reshaping an ancient idea, have known how to intimate their own originality. Doctor Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold, with the underlying aid, no doubt, of British arrogance, were fully competent in the gentle art of cackling. But More's style refuses the faintest cluck. In re-reading the *Shelburne Essays* one finds many a passage of fresh and profound thinking that had previously been concealed (and is now revealed) by the austerest simplicity and impersonality of style. This critic waives entirely that gentle mixture of advertisement and flattery which the modern reader condones and demands. Time, as I have hinted, may justify More's method fully, but not our time. To refuse to conciliate our spirits even while showing how soft our spirits have become, to demonstrate the rawness of our nerves by firmly walking over them—well, our relief has been to loathe him or, at the least, to claim that he is not pertinent to our age.

Yet it now appears that the age is swinging in More's general direction. I should like to state this curious phenomenon in its lowest and plainest terms. But I hesitate to utter the abrupt sentence that arises in me. It may cause all gentle readers to start from their armchairs and scream, "Treason! Treason!" to "look pale and tremble at this chance" as the company in the final scene of *Hamlet* are supposed to do when King Claudius is stabbed. In their heart of hearts, however, the courtly company is, no doubt, much relieved. Claudius, with his monotonous repetition of poisonous wiles, is a tiresome fellow, at least on the modern stage. No one is very sorry when he receives a friendly thrust somewhere near his chest and is carried off-stage to doff his royal robes. Somewhat similar is the case of Nature, as modernly interpreted, and, when the initial shock is over, we gentle readers, in our heart of hearts, shall be glad of this treasonable confession: We are getting thoroughly bored with King Nature.

The attempt to explain all of human life in terms of natural science has now achieved a monotony so sovereign as utterly to overshadow the medieval attempt to explain it all in terms of Latin theology. The reason should be obvious. God and Nature are both essential for human versatility, if for nothing higher. They provide the fundamental variety of Man. If either of these two grand factors is omitted or submerged, our life begins to flatten out. Our literature becomes a stagnant pool, relieved only by vapors, rank or ethereal vapors as the case may be. Such is the divine human irony. But it goes deeper. The human mind is so constituted that it can easily waive God but not Nature. Nature we have always with us; Him, not always. Therefore, when we concentrate our

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attention entirely upon Nature we take the way of least resistance toward complete *ennui*. The Twentieth Century has already succeeded in making itself what the Thirteenth Century, with all its dreadful faults, never was and never could have had the ghost of a chance of becoming—namely, a triumphant bore.

Just here some gentle reader may shake a finger at me and squeak, "Ah, ha, medievalist!" However, I dislike medievalism. What we need is not a retreat to the Middle Ages but a strenuous recovery from our own unexampled retreat into Nature. In this connection, we have to face the grand paradox suggested above. In the Twentieth Century, a vast official preoccupation with man's natural desires has been accompanied by a decline of healthy vigor in those very desires. In the Thirteenth Century, a vast official preoccupation with divinity was accompanied by a huge vigor in man's natural desires. Human appetites in that century surged and beat about the Great White Throne. The cool Sea of Glass constructed by scholastic philosophy was strictly limited in acreage. Ambition and sex-love could be assigned to Dante's hell, but not denied or emasculated by any Christian or behavioristic "science". Hell, in fact, was boldly regarded as part of the divine will. In other words, there was full recognition of the hell and the heaven in human nature, mysteriously co-operant and opposed.

It was thus that the Thirteenth Century prepared the great dramatic energies of the Renaissance. Shakespeare's work is the medieval outlook in full-blown secular form. He was a child of Nature and had no use for other-worldliness. But in the very blood of his brain was the conviction that two different worlds, or natures, meet in man. Hence, the scope and variety of his vision, the intense reality of his contrasts. All his contrasts are fed from one central contrast. He knew by heart the central contrariety of human nature, the opposition between passion and that higher reach of our spirit that is above passion's sway. His great successor, Milton, took up this theme and developed it to its poetic utmost. He envisaged the human duality, so to call it, in sublime images of dark and bright. . . . And More has carried it through the length and breadth of his critical writings; as when (to choose an example almost at random) he remarks upon "the consciousness, which no reasoning of philosophy and no noise of the world can ever quite obliterate, of two opposite principles in us, one bespeaking unity and peace and infinite life, the other calling us to endless change and vision and discord".

It is not improper to bring More into so quick a juxtaposition with Milton. A thing that Milton did for English poetry, More has done for English criticism. He has established therein, with rare philosophic rigor and penetration, the idea of the human duality. Other literary critics have surpassed him in other ways; no other has equalled him in this way. Johnson, Coleridge and Arnold are beyond him in intensity of esthetic response and in richness of personality. Johnson had a wittier force, Coleridge a more brilliant imagination, Arnold a fuller urbanity. But when compared with More they appear somewhat childlike in the art of philosophy. We must go to Milton's prose works to match the analytic power, the width of investigation and the solidity of statement that appear in More's *Greek Tradition*. Like Milton, More had to face the task of rescuing philosophy for literature. Milton tried to rescue it from the sects of theologic metaphysicians. More has rescued it from a confusion worse confounded, namely, from the metaphysics of science superposed upon the metaphysics of theology.

In doing so, he has exhibited, however differently, that combination of Greek thought and Puritan will which characterized Milton but was not maintained by his successors in English literature. In the Eighteenth Century, English Hellenism was con-

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ventional. In the Nineteenth, it was fresh, inflated, confused and, finally, rotten. It had plenty of *good* will, but not strong and strict will. It was shaken to the very center by the new flood of naturistic thought and feeling which it attempted to embrace and direct. Even Emerson in his rockbound New England, remote from the European imbroglio, was half swamped, mentally, by the billows of modern Nature. Certainly he had the Puritan will in his life, but not in the main development of his thought. His ideas swirled loose from it. A brother Puritan, Carlyle, came storming down from Scotland to London and tried to clear the metropolitan air with thunder. But the barometer was too low; his own mind was too foggy. If Concord was too far from London, a cynic might remark, Scotland was too near. Whatever capacity Carlyle had earlier shown for philosophic progress was now beclouded. He shouted graphically on behalf of Jehovah and the old-time Devil. But he could not re-form them for the modern intellect.

To realize what a strait English imaginative thought had come into, we have only to reflect upon this: the chief moral force current in English literature was endowed, in the Seventeenth Century, with the mind of Milton; in the Nineteenth Century, with the mind of Carlyle! This prophet, and he was a real prophet, had no way to meet the new naturistic Hellenism except by despising it. If Carlyle had been an intellectual match for Emerson, the subsequent course of our literature would have been stronger. But the palm, as far as thought was concerned, went to Yankee Hellenism. In other words, the most potent imaginative thought of the past hundred years was created by one who, in his quite provincial reaction from Puritanism, obscured the significance of the Puritan will. The effect appeared in Emerson's disciples, Matthew Arnold and Walt Whitman. They adapted the Emersonian blunder to academic and journalistic palates and did much to establish it for the Twentieth Century.

What our age needed, therefore, was a severe, critical revision of Yankee Hellenism or, more politely, of New England Humanism. This has been provided by Paul More and his compeer, Irving Babbitt. They had the Puritan will in themselves and they have succeeded in translating it into literary thought. Divesting it of Latinistic theology and of Protestant moralism, they have brought it into vital relation with the best of Greek and Hindu philosophy. The Sixth Series of the *Shelburne Essays, Studies of Religious Dualism,* which appeared just twenty years ago, was a quietly momentous book for our time. It represented the Christian conception of the dual will of man, the Sin and Grace so heavily accented by the Puritans, as merely one form of a perennial human experience that is central, not only in religion, but in literature; that constitutes, in fact, the life-giving source of the human imagination.

Certainly this truth was not unknown to More's predecessors in English criticism after Milton. But they did not know it so poetically as Milton nor with such power of discrimination as More. They did not establish it in valid modern terms. Johnson knew it firmly, but he knew it narrowly. Coleridge knew it loftily, but he knew it cloudily. Arnold knew it politely but, alas, he knew it softly! The gentility or, shall we say, the "genteelity", of his acquaintance with the duality of the human spirit was symptomatic and ominous. The progressive softening of that great truth during the modern era has meant the progressive softening of literature —until now. There is a certain attractive excitement in the fact that this American critic, in an age of natural science, has carried the sting and cogency of science into literary thought and has thereby rejuvenated an old human truth.

The interest grows when we note that just now the so solid-seeming universe, created by physical science during the past two centuries, is beginning to melt and shimmer. When a

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sober scientist declares that space must be considered round but unlimited, he is in agreement with the imaginative science of John Milton. Indeed, it seems that science may presently succeed in demonstrating conclusively what the great poets and sages always knew: that material nature is an "insubstantial pageant", a vision of the mind. But, in this case, what becomes of the bulk of contemporary literature? Its interest has hung upon the vivid contrast between the solidity of physical nature and the fluidity of human nature. The "stream of consciousness", to which our writers have more and more devoted themselves, has had a gross, material Nature to flow around. Now, however, this Nature is itself in flux. The "stream of consciousness" becomes a pageant shimmering around a pageant; nebulae whirling about nebulae; streams encircling streams, like the rivers in Milton's hell, "a watery labyrinth".

No wonder we gentle readers are bored with Nature, inner and outer—with the modern King Nature and his labyrinthine ways. Gentle as we are, we rebel when too heavily flooded with watery monotony. We demand in literature, for animation and variety if for nothing higher, some reality of contrast. We do not find this in a sheer, flowing tangle of variegated appetites. We know, from our own most inward experiences, that the essential contrast is between appetite and a region above appetite. We perceive that our writers need to regain a sense of "that element in man which is outside of 'nature' and is denoted by consciously directive purpose". So says More in his current volume, *The Demon of the Absolute* (Princeton University, $2.50). Not that the literary artist should turn moral or religious preacher. No, he must be intimately concerned with "a world shaken by passionate ambition and furious desire". But the very condition of strong passion in literature is that the writer should find in himself a standpoint above passion. The true artist is "one who, by the subtle insinuating power of the imagination . . . gives us always to feel that the true universal in human nature is that part of man that is 'noble in reason', the master and not the slave of passion. True art is thus humanistic rather than naturalistic; and its gift of high and permanent pleasure is the response of our own breast to the artist's delicately revealed sense of that divine control, moving like the spirit of God upon the face of the waters".

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THE LANGUAGE OF THE THEATRE

by Bernard Sobel

An inquiry among actors and a search through the Public Library will disclose to the student of colloquial speech that modern American stage slang is not nearly so extensive as might be expected from a profession which dazzles with so-called mystery, traditions, personalities and out-and-out romance. One anonymous writer, to be sure, in a stray page from an obscure pamphlet, does refer airily to some two thousand words of footlight lingo. But the compilations of Frank Wilstach, almost the sole authority on the subject, contain less than five hundred words, many of these duplicated by the late Walter J. Kingsley, Leo Donnelly and other conscientious collectors.

The slang of the legitimate stage, it seems, exclusive of a small number of fundamental expressions, now crystallized and become staple, has been taking on accretions continuously from all forms of entertainment: burlesque, vaudeville, musical comedy and the circus. The process has been natural enough: a star drifts from burlesque into musical comedy, as did Fanny Brice, bringing her lingo with her. A recruit from vaudeville, the whole theatre broken into bits, carries along with him the parlance of variety. The actor from motion pictures, which is the synthetic theatre, talks back-stage just as he does before the camera.

But no actor confines his slang to that of his own department. He appropriates when necessary expressive terms belonging to all other workers in the theatre—carpenters, box office treasurers, directors, musicians, press agents. Thus, words like "flop", "hit", "run" and "star" belong to the actor now, no matter where they took origin. Inversely, the word "ham" is almost exclusively identified with actors, even though, as William Henry Nugent states, the word is a cockney substitute for amateur in any line of endeavor. Many words, on the other hand, which may once have belonged to the stage are now used so generally that their original lustre has almost faded away and their origins have been forgotten.

Of the real history of the actor, however, little can be found in his current slang. As far back as Aristophanes, there was a theatre lingo, but what remains of it does little to indicate the color or imagination of classical play-acting. Nor does much remain to attest the picturesque turbulence of the Elizabethan period, a period when the slang of the mystery and morality players must have fused richly with the slang of inn yards, university players, Senecan importations and Shakespeare's own colloquialisms. The picture of that master of speech coining a slang expression has all the fascination of incongruity which slang should possess. Yet, whatever influence Shakespeare may have had on the development of slang, it is evident only in a few expressions in popular use. The word, "show", for instance, meaning performance, comes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*

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while the well-known query about salaries, "Does the ghost walk?", is a derivative from the question in *Hamlet,* "Has the thing happened?"

During the many years that the actor has been striving to develop as an artist, he has had to take time off continually to fight for social recognition. The fight has been superlative in its cruelty—vagabond against prince, beggar against capitalist. Actor and actress have risen, notwithstanding, from outlawry, vagabondage and prostitution to *belles-lettres,* the social register and the peerage. Few slang phrases remain, however, to perpetuate the contest and the victory. Those which have persisted concern largely the mere mechanics of acting and have become so general in use as to be generally colloquial: "upstage", "center", "stage wait". "Upstage", though, has taken on the additional meaning of "ritzy", that is, arrogantly proud and vain.

The stage is perhaps the most highly personalized of all professions. An actor must look to his rights as a lioness guards her cubs. His intelligence, as well as his physical assets, from the color of his hair to the sound of his voice, must be exploited, developed and embellished to ensure and maintain his success. Thus, every theatrical performance is, in a sense, a matter of internecine warfare, a warfare waged under the very eyes of the audience and in the restricted areas of dialogue, action and scene. Simply expressed, this means that each player, all the while that he is working for the general success of the play and co-operating with his fellow-players, must, by the very nature of conditions, work paradoxically against them, in order to bring himself forward as prominently as possible. He must personally stand out as an emergent figure in something of which he is only a part, often a small part, this being his only way of winning fame, position and salary.

The ruthlessness of the struggle is nowhere better indicated than in the general use of the term, "kill it", which the stage seems to have appropriated for itself. One electrician takes pride in having coined the expression and getting laughs on "Kill yourself" which means merely "black out" and "work on your own".

The actor's devices for curbing, obscuring and "killing" his fellow players are many, most of them definitely indicated in stage argot. The actor, for instance, who backs up continually while playing, in order to keep his own face to the audience, while pushing his associate in the background, is often told to "come into America", that is, stand still and keep within bounds.

An actor who distracts the attention of the audience by fumbling with his clothes, while someone else is trying to get a laugh is "catching flies". "Cue-biting" means snapping off the lines of the preceding speech in order to destroy their efficacy. A star can avail himself of this device to "step on" his laughs. The actor who manoeuvres for the center of the stage is a "stage hog" or "spot-light hunter". "To dry a man up" is to give him the wrong cue; to crab the lines, "laying the skids". Forgetting the lines entirely is "to balloon" or "make an ascension" and thus "stick" or "corpse" the other player. "Milking the audience" is to over-play for applause. A sweetheart in the flies who keeps shouting, "Take another bow, dearie", is called a "bow-teller".

"A plant" is a person stationed in the audience who works with the actor on the stage. "Ad-libbing" is improvising. "When Jones got lost back stage I had to ad-lib all over the place until he came on."

Some years ago when Duffy and Sweeney, two vaudeville comedians, were about to start on a long tour, E. F. Albee strove to induce them to take out a membership in the National Vaudeville Association club.

"You have all the privileges of the club," Mr. Albee insisted, "and, likewise, in case of death, you have the advantages of a paid up insurance policy for $1000.00."

The actors were finally induced to take out the policy and signed up and then started on

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their tour. Less than a week after, they sent this telegram to Mr. Albee: "Send out the $1000.00 quick. We died last night in New Orleans". Success, however, makes the actor jubilant. He "wows em", "panics" or "gooles 'em". "They rolled over in the aisles."

Sure-fire, but hackneyed, material is "hokum"; brisk gagging between comedians, "crossfire"; a "dead pan" an expressionless face and "mugging" facial pantomime.

Terms like "comic" and "heavy" are now associated almost exclusively with old-fashioned repertory companies. Those sharp outlines which formerly distinguished a play's characters have faded considerably. Indeed, it was inevitable that those playwrights who followed Ibsen should have been profoundly influenced by him in their attitude toward the wicked ones—in *Ghosts,* for instance, there are no denunciations, only the plain truth that the joy of living which had once been so potent a charm in the dead Alving had somehow become vicious. Likewise, those playwrights who followed Shaw learned, in *Candida,* for example, that they were watching a tragedy unfold itself in terms of jest and laughter.

One of the most romantic aspects of stage life has to do with the form that is passing out swiftly, the road show. The rigors of the road varied with the geography of the run; the more sparsely inhabited the district, the more arduous the trip and the greater number of hardships. Today, the New York player hates the road and the show girls spurn it entirely. In the past, however, people assigned to the road were grateful for the engagement and often took pride in it and, though they may have treasured hopes of a New York appearance, they regarded their profession philosophically and humorously.

Such argot as now remains is both compact and expressive. "The road" is the general term for towns outside New York, and the travelling players are "barnstormers". Smaller towns and villages are "sticks". "Simon Legree" means stage manager; "pirating", stealing a "script" and playing it often under another name; "playing to the gas", giving a performance before an audience not worth lighting up for; "blowing the show", running away from an engagement.

When a manager has made his bookings without the consent of the New York office, he "wildcatted." Ernest Hemingway gives a tense picture of the rascality of managers in "A Pursuit Race".

A man in search of an "angel" is a "sugar-chaser". A producer who stalls off an actor is giving him the "merry-go-round" or "run-around". A fifty-week tour is now known as the "Lindbergh trail".

The chorus girl, as those who have read *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* must know, has continued changing her speech, ambitions and deportment as often as a chameleon. From the nameless "spear-carrier" of the old Amazon parades of musical comedy and the "merry-merry", she has grown into a real personality with her picture on the front page and "billing" comparable to that of a star's.

The dancers once known as "ponies" are speedily dubbed by the director in charge. A "left-legged" dancer is one who cannot dance. "Floor moppers" are girls who do the splits and acrobatic dances, roll-overs and cart-wheels. A girl who does nothing more than come on to fill up a scene is said to "hold up the backdrop". "Strut your stuff" takes its origin perhaps from negro "hoofing", a kind of dancing which is at present inundating the American musical comedy stage.

The box-office always is a place of embattlement. Here the argot has to do with the secret facts about the play and the players and trafficking with speculators, "the forty thieves". The argot here resembles a secret code, the terms including "what's the B.O." for what's the box office price of tickets; "deadwood" are tickets unsold; "hard-wood", tickets for standing room or tickets given in exchange for higher priced tickets; "eat 'em", brokers stuck with tickets who can't dispose of them: "digging", accomplices who buy tickets at box office prices for "specs";

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"dumps", tickets returned unsold; "dressing the house", distributing a small audience so that the house seems well filled; and "Leblanging", placing tickets out at cut rates.

In contrast with almost every other department of theatrical life, the argot of the stage hands definitely represents a phase of their history. The early American stage hand was often an ex-seaman and much of his slang harks back to maritime sources. Stage hands are "grips" or "deck hands"; "pipe down", be quiet; "foul", a tangled rope.

Many recent terms of approbation or the opposite may be attributed to the late Jack Conway, slang genius, whose work appeared in *Variety* and included such terms as "belly laughs" and "S.A." (sex appeal).

To George Ade was due that first vogue for American slang which has gratifying permanence in his well-known *Fables in Slang* and published plays. Within the last year or so, Walter Winchell has brought about a revival of this interest with his lively column. Such slang though as he has created, "giggle-water" and "Garbo-Gilberting", must be looked upon as the invention of an ingenious writer rather than the actual lingo of the footlights.

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PASSPORT TO TIR NAN OG

THE LIFE, WORK AND DEATH OF DONN BYRNE

by Thurston Macauley

LAST JUNE dispatches from Ireland were published in the newspapers recounting the sudden and tragic end of Donn Byrne, killed in an automobile accident not far from the castle in Cork which he had acquired but a short time before. Even about his death there seemed to be present that same baffling element of mystery which always made him something of a legendary figure. It is not my intention here to dwell upon circumstances which took from the world a young writer who, although the author of several books that should outlast many contemporary efforts, had probably not reached the zenith of his powers. Because most of his obituaries have been unnecessarily curtailed, I feel there is much still to be said about his brief, but full-lived, career.

For one who had achieved such success as Donn Byrne's, there has been astonishingly little written about him aside from the usual reviews of his books and interviews, on the occasion of his frequent comings and goings, by ship news reporters. Unlike many modern writers, he did not go out of his way to seek publicity; on the contrary, he seemed rather to shun it whenever possible. Perhaps it is for this reason that so many stories and legends have grown up around his name. St. John Adcock wrote a brief sketch of him in *Gods of Modern Grub Street,* which is accompanied by a strange photograph by E. O. Hoppé of Byrne looking up quizzically from a book lying open before him, his eyes revealing a shy and sensitive nature. One of the few persons who knew Byrne intimately for many years is thus quoted:

> He hated democracy, prohibition, machine civilization. He was a typical romantic fighting North Irishman. He was frightfully extravagant. He was helpless in many ways to cope with the modern world. He made enemies galore, principally because he was misunderstood. He made it no secret that he detested many American magazine editors. He called many of them merchants. If one of them accepted one of his stories and appreciated it for the wrong thing, he got angry and made another enemy.

Most readers can be divided roughly into two groups where Donn Byrne is concerned: first, the fervid admirers who go into ecstasies over every word he has written and, second, those who can scarcely tolerate even the mention of his name. The former are too much prejudiced in their unfailing devotion to his colorful prose to maintain a proper perspective, while the latter, who may object to the Irish school of literature generally or to Donn Byrne specifically, are denying themselves such rare pleasures as reading *Messer Marco Polo* or *Blind Raftery*. (Incidentally, those considerable animadversions against Donn Byrne himself as writer had their basis in the facts of his personality: he seemed to be a synthetic Irishman.) The attitude of both admirer and adverse critic is unfortunate since both are bound to lose something through such generalization.

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Irish to the core, Donn Byrne continually tried to live down the fact of his being born in Brooklyn. The British *Who's Who* gives no birthplace; he is listed merely as an "Irish writer". The fact, however, is that his father, Tomas Fearghail Donn-Byrne, a prominent Ulster architect, came to New York in 1889 with his wife, Jane D'Arcy McParlane, to supervise the construction of a building he had designed and it was during this visit that their son was born and christened Brian Oswald Donn-Byrne. The Donn-Byrnes returned to their home in Ireland a few months later and young Brian grew up in the glens of Antrim. At the beginning of *Messer Marco Polo* Donn Byrne wrote: "Antrim will ever color my writing. My Fifth Avenue will have something in it of the heather glen. My people will always have a phase, a thought, a flash of Scots-Irish mysticism . . ."

There followed courses at University College, Dublin—where he received both a master's degree and a boxing title—the Sorbonne and Leipzig. His family hoped to get him in the British Foreign Office, but from the idea of a quiet diplomatic career he bolted to South America. His first writings were verse and he said afterwards that he had then a somewhat vague idea of becoming a cowboy poet. He saved up a stake on the ranges, but it was a poker game on a ship to the States that made him decide to try his luck in New York. He sold a few poems and sketches to the magazines, but worked a while in a garage to eke out a meagre living. Then there came several unfortunate experiences on newspapers. He was fired from the old morning *Sun* after three weeks for writing "poor" newspaper English. He started in as an editorial writer on the now extinct *Globe* and had turned out but three when he lost this job because of some political blunder. He had better luck, however, with the *Brooklyn Eagle,* where he remained for over a year as copyreader. He became an assistant on Dr. Frank Vizetelly's new *Standard Dictionary* staff and, later, a member of the staff of the *Century Dictionary.*

It was about this time—in the year 1911, to be exact—that he married Dorothea Mary Elizabeth Cadogan, daughter of an Irish sea captain (as Dolly Byrne, she collaborated with Gilda Varesi on the play, "Enter Madame", a brilliant success which started the family fortunes). Marriage (he was just past twenty-one) seemed to react favorably upon Donn Byrne, for each year thereafter saw a steadily increasing number of his poems and stories published. In *Harper's* for October, 1915, appeared "The Wake", an excellently contrived mental study of a man awaiting death, which was rightly included in the O'Brien anthology of best short stories of that year. His first book was also published that year, *Stories Without Women.* It created hardly a ripple on the surface of the literary world. His first novel, *The Stranger's Banquet,* published in 1919, received considerably more attention, although not many copies were sold. However, it gave more than a hint of what was to come from the pen of a young writer and the reviews were unusual for a first novel. It seems to have been inspired to some extent by his wife, for it is a tale of an Irish girl, daughter of an old sea rover, and how she ran her father's shipyards after his death. It might be of interest to quote here a portion of the New York *Times* review of it:

> He writes with poetic mysticism of Nature and of the call of life to the heart and soul of a girl. . . . His visions of ships and of the romance of the high seas, of the old garden in Spring and Summer, of the road through Westchester, where the tall trees stood "dignified as Druids" watching the two who lay dead, two to whom even death could not bring dignity—such passages as these have a poetry, a beauty quite out of the ordinary.

Donn Byrne's second novel, *The Foolish Matrons,* which appeared a year later, is of special interest in any consideration of his work, since it shows him at a turning point of his career. A reviewer in the New York

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Times wrote that it contained material enough for four novels, which is true, as it is concerned with the entanglements of the lives of four women, relating four distinct stories. While it reveals a fine feeling for life, a tenderness and occasionally great understanding, there is also much in it that is commonplace, even downright cheap and gaudy. The young author was in the crucial period which confronts nearly every writer at some time or other: when he must decide whether to pander to the popular taste by turning out potboilers of the usual sexy variety, or to write of the beauty he sees in life. It is scarcely necessary to add that Donn Byrne strode ahead in the right direction, for several years later there came into the hands of Glenn Frank, who was then editing *The Century,* the slim manuscript of *Messer Marco Polo* which was to win a lasting fame for its author. First published in three instalments in *The Century* during the summer of 1921, that strangely beautiful re-telling of an old tale caught and held the imagination of all who read it.

In his next book Donn Byrne turned back to the sea that he had written of but sketchily in his first novel. The result was *The Wind Bloweth.* This is still the book which, in my mind, stands out above all the rest, *Messer Marco Polo* included. Those who love the sea, and especially books about the sea, will place these adventures of an Ulster seafaring man on their shelf of favorites. Donn Byrne revived a more or less extinct custom in writing a brief preface to many of his novels (I wonder, by the way, why more do not follow suit) and it seems fitting to quote from that written for *The Wind Bloweth:*

> Whilst I was working on the various problems of *The Wind Bloweth*—problems of wisdom, of color, of phrasing, and trying to capture the elusive, unbearable ache that is the mainspring of humanity, and doing this through the medium of a race I knew best, a race that affirms the divinity of Jesus and yet believes in the little people of the hills, a race that loves its own land, and yet will wander the wide world over, a race that loves battle, and yet always falls—whilst doing this, it seemed to me that I was capturing for an instant a beauty that was dying slowly, imperceptibly, but would soon be gone.
>
> Perhaps it was the lilt of a Gaelic song in these pages that brought a sorrow on me. That very sweet language will be gone soon, if not gone already, and no book learning will revive the suppleness of idiom, that haunting misty loveliness. . . . It is a very pathetic thing to see a literature and a romance die.

A bibliography of Byrne's work will show that more and more of his writings began to appear in our periodicals, and, it might also be noted, he was deserting the quality class—*Harper's, Scribner's, Century* and the rest—for the more lucrative popular field—*Collier's, Pictorial Review* and *The Saturday Evening Post.* No disparagement is intended in mentioning this, for I think it can be said that many of these short stories can easily be ranked among the finest things he ever did. This has been a bone of contention, however, between Byrne and some of the friends of his struggling days, who raise the obvious charge that he was prostituting his art for filthy lucre. Nothing was further from the truth. I do not believe he ever intentionally "wrote down" to any level of readers.

The Wind Bloweth was followed with a fine volume of short stories reprinted under the title, *Changeling: and Other Stories*—dedicated by the author to his good friend, the Right Honorable T. P. O'Connor—one reading of which will bear out the points made in the preceding paragraph. The story which gives the book its name is vivid and dramatic, a blend of O. Henry and Somerset Maugham. There is, in fact, material in it for a first rate play, with a leading rôle along the general lines of a Sadie Thompson. The next, "The Barnacle Goose", like the author's own life, treats of an Irishman who returns to his native land after living many years in America. "Belfasters", "In Praise of Lady Margery Kyteler" and "Reynardine" are three

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pure Irish tales. The last named involved the the legend of the Fitzpauls, that Irish family whose crest is the fox, the cunning animal being linked with them, according to legend, by some strange bonds of sympathy. The story of Lady Kyteler, who would not leave her beloved family home, even to go away with the man she loved, is one of Byrne's best stories. (This legend is also referred to at some length in *Hangman's House* in a prelude to a hunting scene.) "A Quatrain of Ling Tai Fu's" is nearly as perfect an example of its kind as one could find, again somewhat suggestive of O. Henry in method and treatment. "The Keeper of the Bridge" is another tale based upon superstition. "Irish" has to do with the prize-ring. This volume also contains two rather well done retellings of biblical narratives, Solomon and Sheba and Samson and Delilah, an indication of an interest Byrne was to work out in wider scope in his novel, *Brother Saul*. Those who dip into this book of stories will be well repaid for the effort.

Blind Raftery, a short novel but a trifle longer than *Messer Marco Polo* and almost equally good, was published in one instalment in the *Pictorial Review* for August, 1924. It tells of the wanderings up and down the green land of an old, blind poet and his young Spanish wife. It is as much poetry as prose, with the same imagery that characterized *The Wind Bloweth*. This he followed with "An Untitled Story", published serially in *Century,* and called *O'Malley of Shanganagh* when it appeared between covers.

I have thus far neglected to mention that Byrne had forsaken America in the meantime for his beloved Ireland. Newspapers in March, 1922, carried items about several attachments being placed on the home of Mr. and Mrs. Donn Byrne at Riverside, Connecticut. Whether it was to remove himself from financial difficulties that he returned to the land of his fathers I do not know, but the fact remains that soon afterward he left for Dublin with his wife and four children. The next thing heard of him was a cable dispatch from London the following July, expressing fear for his safety. He had gone to Ireland despite the fact that, as an official of the Orange Lodge in this country, he had received threatening letters from Sinn Feiners, warning him against visiting the south of Ireland, and had not been heard from since leaving London. For a time he and his family lived in a little place in Surrey, spending much of their winters on the Riviera. Byrne had an inordinate passion for gambling and recklessly won or lost huge sums on the gaming tables of Cannes and Monte Carlo.

The one thing that redeems Byrne's next novel, *Hangman's House,* which was published serially in *Pictorial Review,* is its reflection of the great love he had for sports of all kinds, especially horse racing. In a lengthy "foreword to foreigners" he bared his heart on what he held most dear in life—Ireland. "I am certain that no race has for its home the intense love we Irish have for Ireland," he wrote. "It is more than love. It is a passion." But he went further, perhaps too far, in adding:

> . . . to myself, the last traditional Irish novelist (the last, living master, because the youngest: I have only begun my six and thirtieth year), the work of writing the last traditional Irish novel has fallen. We shall always—please God! —have Irish writers, but their models will be Scandinavian or American. Our young men have seen terrible realities, and in the Ireland of the future you must be efficient in order to live. So the school of Goldsmith and Sterne will pass . . .

If he had been writing those lines, say, for *The Wind Bloweth* or *Messer Marco Polo,* any conceit, whether intended or otherwise, might have been overlooked; coupled with *Hangman's House,* in which his love for Ireland is patently butchered to pay for a Riviera holiday, they are nothing short of ludicrous. There followed a hopeless dramatization of the book, produced the same year.

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A motion picture version did not fare so badly, however, which might be basis for the suspicion that the author had all along kept a weather eye cocked in the general direction of Hollywood. At any rate, that might serve as some explanation. Out of respect for one who can no longer answer in reply, we pass on to other things.

Byrne went to Syria and Palestine to get material for his next book, *Brother Saul*. It was received with praise, both here and in England. A reviewer in the London *Bookman* wrote that it was "as good a biography as Dean Farrar's *Life of St. Paul* and as good a novel as *Jew Süss;* viewed from the purely literary aspect it is better than either". The Near East provided the setting for the novel that came after, *Crusade,* which was published serially in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1927 and in book form the following spring. His first posthumous book, *Destiny Bay,* was published last fall.

Destiny Bay came to Donn Byrne enthusiasts as a welcome return to the Ireland of his earlier books. It has come to be ranked as one of the best sellers of all his works. Inasmuch as it contains some of his finest short stories, such popularity is, indeed, merited, although it was bound to be influenced by the accident of his death. Practically all of the nine stories therein were first printed in either *Pictorial Review* or *The Saturday Evening Post,* but they have to do with one family living on the northern coast of Ireland and are told in the first person by Kerry the Younger, heir of Destiny Bay, who is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the author as he saw himself. The portrait of the last of the giants of the London prize-ring is the "Tale of James Carabine". All of the stories are well done and they are peopled with such fine characters as the red-bearded Uncle Valentine, the sweet, blind Aunt Jenepher, Cousin Jenico at Spanish Men's Rest and Kerry himself, so that it is no easy matter to choose among them. This is a book that will help to keep the name of Donn Byrne alive. There is a prefatory note to this book which I wish to quote, as it sums up his attitude toward politics:

> The Author of *Destiny Bay* has requested his publishers to announce that in using the word "Ulster" throughout the book, it is merely because his childhood was spent among the mountains and lakes of Ulster and on the cliffs of Ulster. . . . If any phrases in this book of *Destiny Bay* show a predilection towards one or the other way of politics, the Author prays that they may not be taken as serious. He has never yet seen a government that brought heavier apples to the trees or heavier salmon in the rivers or a more purple heather and for this reason politics mean nothing to him.

His last book (to be published next autumn by the Century Company) may bear the rather strange title of *The Power of the Dog*. It is not an animal story. It is of the Napoleonic era, concerned with a young Irishman on the staff of Lord Castlereagh, and the canvas which Byrne has chosen is a vast one.

In a letter to O. K. Liveright, his American agent, sent shortly before his death, Byrne mentioned two more books he had hoped to finish: "The title of my next book is 'The Case is Altered', from the name of a public house in Surrey. It has taken a great deal of form and vitality since we spoke of it. I have also in mind the novel after that, if I am spared to write it . . . I told you I had bought Coolmain Castle. I am putting in electric lights, a telephone and the largest white bathroom in Ireland". He concluded by saying that he was keeping himself "as fit as the other literary gent—Gene Tunney".

In an article of his published in *The National Geographic Magazine* about two years ago one is given a real insight into the man and his great love for his country. This, one of his few pieces of non-fiction, bears the title, "Ireland: The Rock Whence I Was Hewn". It contains, moreover, an excellent dissertation on the Gaelic tongue, from which I quote here:

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My boyhood was spent in those parts of northern Ireland where Gaelic was still spoken; and, having more curiosity about horses, dogs and boats than about books, I grew up speaking Irish and English with equal fluency; . . .

A Highlander and an Islesman of Scotland speak the same Gaelic as I do, as do the remnant of people in the Isle of Man who speak their native Manx. In Manx, spoken now I am told by not more than two hundred people, the dialect is that of County Down, Ireland. The Highlander and the man of the Hebrides use a less inflected Gaelic than ours. . . .

Our Gaelic tongue is difficult to learn, supple as a whip. I know of nothing absolute, such as life, death, religion, which cannot be discussed in it with ease. . . .

About Ireland itself he wrote thus:

To me Ireland always is the thatched cottage on the mountain side, the thunder of the hunt as it goes for Fairyhouse River, the grave, soft Irish voices. There is even a terrible black beauty about the mountainy men as, mad with solitude and drink, they crash through a fair fighting. . . .

We spend our lives seeking to form Ireland. Our poets come down from the mountain tops, crying: I have here a song that will make Ireland wake. Our young men gallop into the streets trying to found a commonwealth more noble than the dream of Plato. Our statesmen rise up with papers in their hands, saying: Here is the New Ireland we have wrought. Let it begin. The old men look at us strangely, with a curious lack of enthusiasm, but they say nothing to hinder us, for they, too, have known these dreams. . . .

Half an hundred moons; a few more harvests of the mountain ash, and our time is come to leave for *Tir nan Og,* to which our passport is that we loved our country. But the thrushes and the wrestling, the poems and greyhounds and chiming rivers of the Assured Land can hardly tear us from her who has given us birth and vision. Herself has to draw us into her arms and put a quiet on us.

I can think of no more fitting epitaph for him than these four lines which comprise the last stanza of a poem, "The Piper", one of his first published writings, which appeared in *Harper's* for February, 1912:

I will take my pipes and go now, and God go out with you all,
And keep all sorrow from you and the dark heart's load.
I will take my pipes and go now, for I hear the summer call,
And you'll hear the pipes a-singing as I pass along the road.

THE BOOKS OF DONN BYRNE

NOVELS

The Stranger's Banquet, *Harper's, 1919*
The Foolish Matrons, *Harper's, 1920*
Messer Marco Polo, *Century, 1921*
The Wind Bloweth, *Century, 1922*
Blind Raftery, *Century, 1924*
O'Malley of Shanganagh, *Century, 1925*
Hangman's House, *Century, 1926*
Crusade, *Little, Brown, 1927*
Brother Saul, *Century, 1927*

SHORT STORIES

Stories Without Women, *Harper's, 1915*
Changeling: and Other Stories, *Century, 1923*
Destiny Bay, *Little, Brown, 1928*

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"WORDS, WORDS, WORDS"

by C. E. Montague

In youth you easily fall in love with words, written or spoken. You come, like other lovers, to feel an unreasoned, sensuous thrill of joy at a word because it is just what it is—the sound of it and the look of it on a page—as a child's mind thrills at the touch of fur because it is sleek and at that of a file because it is not. Apart from the interest attaching to their use in any particular place, such words as "burnish", "crozier", "lustre", "beatitude", "dawn" become enamoring objects, with glowing hearts of their own, like red wine or rubies.

A sculptor alone in his studio will fondly stroke a lump of unworked marble or bronze; he can dote on its qualities. A writer or a good reader will do much the same. His mind will finger single words and caress them, adoring the mellow fullness or granular hardness of their several sounds, the balance, undulation or trailing fall of their syllables, or the core of sunlike splendor in the broad, warm central vowel of such a word as "auroral". Each word's evocative value or virtue—its individual power of touching springs in the mind and of initiating visions—becomes a treasure to revel in.

Besides this hold on affection, a word may well have about it the glamorous prestige of high adventures in great company. Think of all that the plain word, "dust", calls to mind. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was." "Dust hath closed Helen's eyes." "All follow this and come to dust." "The way to dusty death." So, to the lover of words, each word may be not a precious stone only, but one that has shone in Solomon's temple or in Cleopatra's hair. Out of these illustrious atoms, all the freakish pinnacles and cupolas of the world's wit were made, all the glow and intensity of its eloquence, and the sweet poignancy of songs. All things in literature are born of them; into them all things will die, but the words themselves will remain, like the gases and salt into which we go back at our deaths; and each word is like some small parcel of earth that was once Cæsar's brain and may yet make the brain of the next Christ that comes. Storied and ancient, it still has the freshness of youth; it lies, shiningly new, at the hand of every boy or girl who opens eager eyes upon life; it is as ready to enter into melodies now as the single notes that were marshalled by Bach.

Thus, and with no qualification to his ecstasy, meditates the young, the unwedded wooer of words.

II

The happiest of wedded lives is a different thing from a wooing. It is a better state. But it is also a more open-eyed state. In it there may come a sense, not felt before, that married happiness is a thing to be kept only on certain conditions. The terms of

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the lease are not harsh; still, it is not a fee simple. To anyone who espouses the art of letters and treats his bride fairly, there comes a somewhat similar recognition. He who weds words is tied, like the husband of the fairest lady, to one who has to carry about her many other properties of earth besides the power, which he had already noted, of growing roses and lilies on her surface.

Like the sculptor, who never can fashion a hair or thread in marble, the writer finds himself pulled up at many points by the nature of his material. Words, like marble, have their own chilling form of rigidity. Inspire and prompt as it may in practice, the beloved material is always imposing upon its lover some limitation or other, and there is no sentence in which a writer, burning to charge his utterance with its utmost fill of significance, does not feel that some words, at least, are mere structural necessities, not signal rockets but only the dead-weight sticks that must attend them. The harder a writer tries to add beauty to clearness, the more surely does he feel himself to be held off from perfection by attributes of language which he did not make and cannot do away with; words that otherwise come near to expressing fully his personal sense of some enchanting thing may be found to hiss with sibilant letters, or scrunch and jolt with grinding lumps of harsh consonants, or dribble off into weak trickles of unaccented syllables. At every turn he is faced with a demand for compromise: either the sensuous rightness of rhythm may have to forego a part of its dues, or the more austere beauty of precision and coherence must be marred. At moments the true, wedded lover almost craves for a larger liberty. Oh, for some yet undiscovered mode of notation! Why should not mind be able to pass on to mind its thrilled sense of a storm or a flower, without having to knead up the air and fire of the delighted spirit with the earth of a current vocabulary?

So, in certain moods, the writer who loves words most truly may come near to thinking of them as "matter", the accursed thing, the ever-present incubus which obstructs and disables. Wooden, lumpish, perverse, they seem to head him off from the goal; they keep his work from being all that it seems it might be. Like "the flesh" or "the world", in the biblical contrasts between these things and grace, they are that in which the divine agency of his art is destined to labor and which it has to transfigure or to redeem, but which never cease to stand out frowardly for their own graceless ways. Objects, to him, of intense affection and of unquenchable hope, as the world was to Christ, words are the enemy too, the careless, unfeeling, brute mass that will not respond: they may even crucify those who, like Flaubert, try the hardest to deliver them from their common poorness of significance.

III

In yet another light a writer may view the dear enemies, as old lovers in books used to say, of his repose. In words themselves he may see a kind of internal conflict. You can fancy the marble "David" of Michelangelo as existing before it was actually carved. Immured like some fossilized shell in the marble surrounding it, there it was, every grain of it, only awaiting release from the oppression of that encumbering bulk of gross matter. And yet the statue itself was matter as well as the rest of the block, and so it is now. It was, till liberated, a piece of matter kept out of its rights, debarred from being all that it had in itself to be. When the sculptor had disengaged it from its prison, it was the same piece of matter that had lain "in cold obstruction" in the dark midst of a formless rock. Yet something momentous had befallen it. It had been charged with immediate power to stir mind and heart. It had attained so choice a measure of self-completion that, as long

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as it lasts, it will be as wonderfully different from any rough block of similar stone as Michelangelo himself was from a tall ape.

Still, we should go too fast or too far if we were to write off, as "mere matter" or as "waste matter", all the rest of the block from which "David" has been extricated. Relatively to the "David", no doubt, it is waste matter. Relatively to something else, it may be splendidly to the purpose. Every good-sized splinter of it must have held a fine statuette that some artist with the right power might have rescued from its particular dungeon. Relatively, to some unachieved possibility of its own, every flake that is chipped off may be essential and organic. That it is so is the only safe working assumption: we may find least to abandon or to overhaul, as our thinking goes on, if we think now of all marble, all paint, all words, all the material in which any art works, as capable of transfiguration, as awaiting it, almost as attempting it and crying to artists for their help in this continual effort of self-emancipation, self-realization.

What, then, becomes of that lovers' quarrel between the writer and his material? And of the brothers' quarrel between the marble that is taken and that which is left? These piques seem to dwindle in presence of a more momentous war in which all these, or the souls of all these, fight as allies. The rescue of matter from being mere matter, of marble from being mere flaky lumps of the crust of the earth, of language from being a buzz of crude signals and rudimentary chatter and no more—this is the divine event that beckons to both sculptors and writers and, in a sense, to matter itself; and the contribution of matter to its own deliverance is its evolution of special qualities conducive to the end in view, the choice loveliness of the textures of stone, its fissile quality: its gift of weathering the brilliant lustre, depths and diversity of paint, and the inherent comeliness and melody of words to eye and ear, apart from their meanings in the obvious sense of meaning. They find these sinews of war while the artists fight for them and with them.

IV

The common adversary is less easily definable than these aspiring forces that are leagued against him. He is formlessness—a kind of lumpish and sluggish recalcitrance, a hugger-mugger fecklessness, always ready to possess the world and ourselves, an inveterate half-ness afflicting, if it can, the glories of our birth and state.

A man who writes at the top of his powers, from a full mind, is always longing to be shorter than he is. Why, he feels, should not these symbols that he has to use be cut free from their baggage of lengthiness and their cumbrous rules of construction? Why should a glowing sentence have to be dulled with such lack-lustre dust as all the "its" that clog it—with "is" and "that" and "which" and "to"? When all is done that man can do, what a quantity of dull setting there has had to be for each gem that he has cut! At best, how much of the matter to how little of form!

There is no coherent sentence in which you will not find, in some proportion or other, both matter and form. Even in a song of Shakespeare there are some words which, you may say, contribute nothing directly to the intoxicant glory of the whole. They are not vines; only props in the vineyard. And even in the frisking of the cheap humorists there is a kind of form; the old words do, at least, go through a kind of poor, weary dance, like the Frenchman's chained bear.

In the inarticulate exhaustiveness of an English dictionary, you may see the huge range of living stone out of which have been quarried and modelled such treasures of art as the lines following:

> the tide of pomp
> That beats upon the high shore of this world.

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What has befallen those four common nouns, one common verb and one common adjective dug out of the hillside? First, a triumphant survival, a retention of prestige, when each was tried, as it were, for its life, in the pitiless just court of a supreme artist seeking the perfect means to his end. One imagines Shakespeare writing the passage, perhaps, as long at first as one of his full-blown similes —King Richard's simile of the clock or the Primate's of the bee-hive—and then asking himself, "Can I not, by some ellipse, some crystallization of the value of all these words, into a few granules of gleaming suggestiveness, make the whole mass of significance flash out at once, instead of slowly blinking and twinkling its way into clearness?" Then, the slaughter of a dozen lines and the re-concentration of their value on the thirteen words left—to the mysterious enrichment of these as if, like primitive man in his own imagination, they had taken into themselves the virtues of rivals whom they had killed and devoured. Thus, at every step in the ascending scale of creative energy which brings such things to the birth, you see two interdependent processes at work. The thing which is coming to perfection is being drastically purged of words, more and more words, as if words were presumptively dross; and a diminishing residue of words is being impregnated and re-impregnated with a strange, super-normal glory and wonder of expressiveness and beauty.

Or is this enrichment not super-normal at all, but really normal, simply the release of the chosen words, for the moment, from an abnormal or subnormal dullness and plainness, that afflict them at other times?

> She walks in beauty like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies.

All the words here are common enough; and one may feel, either that kitchen coals have turned for a moment into diamonds or, else, that a few diamonds have ceased for once to masquerade as kitchen coal. It all depends on what you take to be "par" in the scale of expressiveness—the faint significance of words, like "ridge", "pine", "wild", "fledged", for a country dullard or their evocative magic for a Keats.

> Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
> Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
> Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
> Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep.

That, in turn, may depend on what you are inclined to think of the future of the race—whether mankind strikes you as resembling an adolescent, only on the threshold of a glorious adult life, or as a rose that already is overblown. You may like to think of any word that has color and form as of Stratford or Haworth in the Middle Ages, waiting obscurely for a Shakespeare or Brontë to make it illustrious, or as one of the physical elements in which a living body of special beauty is presently to be composed.

V

One of the oldest of common antitheses is between the ideal and the thing that we have to put up with, an imaginable perfection and some moderate good which must serve. Nor is it a long step from thinking of something as distinguishable from the ideally good to thinking of it as bad. Hence, the old friarly feuds against the common good things of life, the backing of spirit against flesh, and of the Kingdom of God against this pleasant, faulty world and, in art, the setting of matter and form by the ears.

But, for all we can see, matter and form, like body and soul, are co-extensive and interdependent; each is a condition of the other's existence, and Shakespeare's art itself could no more decline to be yoked with that plod-

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ding Dobbin, the English speech that others had made before he arrived, than his spirit could go from Stratford to London without certain help from his legs. If form enables matter to rise to its highest achievable power, matter is that in which, alone, form can find exercise for its own transfiguring faculty. In the most perfect picture or book there may be almost no mere matter left; but what has happened is not that matter, in the main, has been expelled; rather, that no considerable margin of matter remains unanimated by form. There is scarcely any "mere" paint in the "Sistine Madonna", but there is plenty of paint.

Obvious analogues can be found in the field of religion and of words. The faith of the man who, whether he eats or drinks or does anything else, does it all to the glory of God, is an own sister to the form which marshals and inspirits matter of all sorts into beauty and nobility. When the devout speak of "the beauty of holiness", or men of science speak of a "beautiful" or an "elegant" demonstration of some physical fact or law, you may feel how far the workings of form, in the sense known to art, extend beyond the tender contentions of artists in letters, marble or paint, with the beloved and exasperating materials that they have espoused.

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THOREAU: A DISPARAGEMENT

by Llewellyn Powys

To a student of literature, it is interesting to observe how easily, I had almost said how fortuitously, certain men of letters have won that relative immortality which belongs to the craft of writing. In our eagerness to find some criterion, some absolute standard of worth in this difficult trade, we console ourselves with talk about the judgment of posterity, about the continual punctilious process of acceptance and rejection that is undertaken in each succeeding age "by the best minds" and which represents, so we assume, a deep instinct in the human race to preserve that which is of greatest value. There is more in this, however, than meets the eye. As in all human transactions, it is clear that chance or lucky accident plays a large part.

A good case in point is the work of Thoreau which I suspect has been and is today much overrated. Thoreau is cried up as being one of the greatest American writers. In reality, he was an awkward, nervous, self-conscious New Englander who, together with an authentic taste for oriental and classical literature, developed a singular liking for his own home woods. He does not strike me as an original thinker, bolstered up as his thoughts always are by the wisdom of the past. Mysticism, that obstinately recurring form of human self-deception, is, in his case, even more unsatisfactory than usual, while his descriptions of nature that have won such applause are seldom out of the ordinary. I am inclined to think that his reputation owes much to his close association with Emerson, that truly great man, who under so kindly and sedate an exterior possessed so mighty a spirit.

The naïveté of Thoreau's mind is incredible. At his best, he is second best. He is too cultured and not cultured enough. It is, in truth, amazing that this provincial pedant, who so strained to be original, should enjoy the distinction he does. "He was as local as a woodchuck," wrote John Burroughs. He observed nature closely but his most original passages are forced. His is a note-book observation, a very different thing from that deep underswell of passionate feeling that distinguishes, for example, the poetry of Walt Whitman when he chants of wild and free life. As I read this dilettante of the bluebird and the bobolink, I constantly find myself becoming impatient. He is too bookish, too literary. To draw direct power out of the ground, out of the smelling, fecund, sweet soil of the earth, it is necessary to lose oneself, it is necessary to lose one's soul to find it. Thoreau never is able to do this. He is always there, the transcendental original of Concord with a lesson to impart. It is impossible for him to feel nature in his lungs, in his navel, in the marrow of his bones. He must always have his journal-book within reach and must be fussing to enter on its pages some apothegm or apt description which he knows will later be

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commended by Emerson or by his less discerning lyceum audiences.

Thoreau plays at loving nature but his authentic background is not really in the cold woods as, for example, was the background of Thomas Bewick or even John Burroughs. We learn that he was extremely deft at making lead pencils. Emerson, always eager to praise his friend, testifies to this: "He could make as good a lead pencil as the English ones". Thoreau certainly used these dainty productions to some purpose, for what a murmur he made about his retreat at Walden Pond!

When we look into the matter there was really little enough "to it". At best, it was but a dramatic gesture. The celebrated hut was actually situated on the outskirts of Concord, within a mile and a half of the village, built on Emerson's land—in Emerson's yard, one might almost say. With an axe borrowed from his friend Alcott he constructed his habitation out of boards which had been conveyed to the woods from an Irishman's shanty. It was within sight of the railway and so close to the public highway that the woodland air was continually being impregnated with tobacco smoke from the pipes of wayfarers on the near-by road. Thoreau declares that he "never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude" but actually his house was constantly visited by friends. Indeed, it was fitted with a guest chamber. The undertaking was a form of pedantic play. The hermit himself often spent an evening in the village, returning in the dark, which was to him a great matter. "It is darker in the woods, even on common nights than most suppose." Bookworm that he was, the simplest country occupation fills him with self-conscious satisfaction. He records with pride how he came over the ice "trailing a dead pine tree under each arm to my shed". So little was he acquainted with the lore of the forest that he actually, on one occasion, when he was frying fish during one of his picnics, started a bush-fire which endangered the whole village of Concord!

Much of his writing is sheer affectation. He was asked whether he was not lonely and answered, "no more lonely than the loon on the pond that laughs so loud, or the Walden Pond itself. What company has that lovely lake, I pray. And yet it has not the blue devils, but the blue angels in it, in the azure tint of its waters". He goes for an excursion into Canada. "We styled ourselves Knights of the Umbrella and the Bundle". He was, in truth, a woodsman of the umbrella!

He is never weary of girding at the rich and conventional. "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity," he exhorts and, then, the next moment can pen a sentence that has upon it the very stamp of finical banality. "The luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm but unnaturally hot; as I implied before, they are cooked, of course, *à la mode*." Sometimes it is as though he has no conception of what dignity of style means. He will call himself "the self-appointed inspector of snow-storms and rain-storms". "Our whole life is startlingly moral," he writes. "There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. Goodness is the only investment that never fails. In the music of the harp which trembles round the world it is the insisting on this which thrills us. The harp is the travelling patterer for the Universe's Insurance Company, recommending its laws, and our little goodness is all the assessment that we pay."

Perhaps it was the unfortunate upshot of his romantic attachment for Miss Ellen Sewall which gave his mind a cramped and crooked turn with regard to that emotion "before which all creation trembles and faints". The girl records that her father "wished me to write immediately in a short explicit and cold manner to Mr. Thoreau" and one wonders if the discouragement of the receipt of this letter did not help to dry up his already somewhat sapless nature. As

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the years passed Thoreau felt estranged from his indulgent patron, Emerson, and yet how he could have been instructed by that great man!

Give all to love;
Obey thy heart;

This back-door hermit has in his mouth all those convenient utterances that are in their very essence contrary to nature. He should have given more attention to the song of the hermit thrush! "Chastity is the flowering of man." "Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open." "He is blessed who is assured that the animal is dying out in him day by day, and the divine being established." Could he not have learned better doctrine from his Brooklyn friend, "the greatest democrat the world has ever seen"? We remember *his* utterance, "The soul is not greater than the body and the body is not greater than the soul". There is no end to Thoreau's Sunday School talk, "If you would avoid uncleanness, and all the sins, work earnestly though it be at cleaning a stable. Nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome". We know now why we hear so much about his brave bean field on that lot of Emerson's which was in the opinion of a local farmer "good for nothing but to raise cheeping squirrels on".

And yet one must not be too captious. One must not depreciate unfairly this bookish philosopher. He does offer a charming picture of himself hoeing his beans, walking with bare feet from end to end of the lines while "green berries deepened their tints by the time I had made another bout". Yes, he is often able by some literary turn to give a freshness to his writing, this man who was "no more lonely than a single mullein or dandelion in a pasture . . . or the first spider in a new house". It is pleasant to think of him walking to Nine-Acre-Corner, or getting his feet wet in Becky Stow's swamp, or exploring some new "all-across-lot route", or gravely meditating how, with thrift, he could support life by using as his habitation "a large box in the railroad six feet long by three wide in which the laborers locked up their tools at night" while earning his daily bread by picking huckleberries.

It is possible from his pages to cull certain passages of wisdom. "This life is a strange dream and I don't believe at all any account men give of it." "There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living." "The greater part of what my neighbors call good I believe in my soul to be bad, and if I repent of anything it is very likely to be my good behavior." "I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.", He can also give us glimpses of his life in the woods that have a true beauty, as, for example, when paddling about Walden Pond after dark he would see "perch and shiners, dimpling the surface with their tails in the moonlight". To those of us who love the American countryside, there is a magic in the mere enumeration of the familiar flora, the goldenrod, the St. John's wort, the sumach! And yet, even here, one can be jarred by his method of expression. In his journal we come upon this passage about skunk cabbages. And how discouraging its jocular tone seems when one remembers the sturdy growth of this swamp vegetation which heralds the coming of the spring by thrusting up through the chilled ground mottled, red, curling horns that smell of the arm pits of Pan! "If you are afflicted with melancholy at this season, go to the swamp and see the brave spears of skunk-cabbage buds already advanced toward a new year. Their grave-stones are not bespoken yet. Who shall be sexton to them? Is it the winter of their discontent? Do they seem to have lain down to die, despairing of skunk-cabbagedom? 'Up and at 'em' . . . 'Excelsior' . . . these are their mottoes."

Thoreau was a great reader of books of the ancient tradition, but he was neither a profound thinker nor a great writer, and that is the truth.

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PROVINCETOWN

by Edmund Wilson

We never from the barren down,
  Beneath the silver-lucid breast
Of drifting plume, gazed out to drown
  Where daylight whitens to the west.

Here never in this place I knew
  Such beauty by your side, such peace—
These skies that brightening imbue
  With dawn's delight the day's release!

Only upon the barren beach,
  Beside the gray egg of a gull,
With that fixed look and fervent speech,
  You stopped and called it beautiful.

Lone as the voice that sped the word!—
  Gray-green as eyes that ate its round!—
The desert dropping of a bird,
  Bare-bedded in the sandy ground.

Tonight, where clouds like foam are strown,
  I ride alone the surf of light—
As—even by my side—alone,
  That stony beauty burned your sight.

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GUIDO BRUNO—ROMANTIC GHOST

by Ed Falkowski

GREENWICH VILLAGE once crystallized into a gay, irresponsible Bohemia where ragged but dreamy poets gave themselves unsparingly to their joys and their sorrows and scoffed at the busy world that rumbled on in its daily routines of commerce, knowing nothing of the magic and romance that could make life a leaping flame, magnificent and intense.

Among the dreamers who wove the fantasy of the Village into the American imagination at that time was Guido Bruno. His name scarcely percolated beyond the confines of the Village itself, where he was known as one who dwelt in a garret, ate precariously and was frequently a kind of pocket handkerchief in the service of the great.

Bruno was the born romanticist and illusionist. Life was a beautiful maiden, with wistful dream webs spun across her deep eyes, walking down a silent, crooked lane in a wet October night. Guido never left his creaky apartment without sharpening his appetite for another chunk of Life. He was intensely alive, determined to know every spring and sewer of this divine adventure. Yet, curiously endowed with the soul of a priest, he was never happy unless he found someone to worship. Forever trailing gods through the confusion of cafés and inns and scraggy flights of stairs leading to vile glooms where mysterious souls struggled for the esthetic life, he clung to numerous coat-tails, never standing alone to breast cold winds.

Sadakichi Hartman fascinated the romantic Italian, filled him with great visions. Bruno's soul rose on worshipful wings, circling idolatrously, through veils of incense. Hartman's *Christ* threw him into ecstasies of respect for the versatile and highly competent Jap who had fallen into the ways of western culture.

The next peak in Bruno's spiritual progress was Frank Harris. Bruno simply obliterated himself before Harris with humility. He dwelt in the cool shadow of this Titan, daring occasionally to nourish some fragile pot-plant of an idea which finally flowered in the pages of *Pearson's,* or lay beautifully incarnated in sentimental prose on the pages of *Bruno's Weekly* or *Monthly.*

Harris strutted in awe-inspiring humility up and down Village lanes, snubbing easily the criticules and curio-mongers about him. Harris cannot tolerate rivalry without forgetting the meekness of his own gospel and becoming the open brute, challenging his opponents to conflict. Impressed with his own greatness, which smacks of Victorianism, Harris swaggers through his romance of life.

Harris squared with Bruno's dreams of the ideal live man. No thin wishes, writhing for distant incarnation, no pallid intentions awaiting avatar—here was a man whose dream merged at once with reality; a man who lived every moment of his full, round life. Unlike the scrawny creatures Bruno had seen about him, wordy, dreamy, futile beings who petered into obscurity via Village attics,

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Harris was full of tingling life. It poured into him and he always panted for more. Living was an obligation to be taken very seriously. One either lives or one never lives.

Bruno would learn the secret from this marvellous master who had lived through numberless adventures and the deeper mysteries of life, and had never changed his romantic, somewhat quixotic, temperament, which drove him from one tangle to another —from one cross to another, as he would prefer to express it.

II

Bruno's relations with Frank Harris are dimmed with romantic fogs. Bruno played Sancho to Harris's Quixote. The pair got on beautifully, Bruno devoting whole issues of his reedy publication to swell Harris's fame on this side of the water. Harris mounted the lecture platform, revealing the inner secrets of the great at whose hearths he had argued, whom he had even insulted and attempted to belittle when their puffed vanity became torture. Bruno followed absorbedly, the ideal disciple. Harris could commit no wrong. Whatever he did was done superbly well. When he dipped his pen and scratched it across paper, masterpieces came into the world, and Bruno's mouth gaped wonder as piece after piece poured into the hypersensitive columns of *Pearson's,* defying the whole war-crazed world to prove it had any modicum of common sense.

Finally, Harris took on the robe of martyrdom. With pain ever present, he shed tears that were miniature deluges, and *Pearson's* fairly dripped with woe as he proclaimed the world lost—particularly this nation which had gone in for prohibition, censorship, militarism and other undemocratic pastimes which it had been the object of the war to suppress.

Throwing up his hands in measureless despair, Harris vanished from these shores to seek happier lands where champagne still flows and a gentleman can moisten dry conversation with respectable beverages.

Strangely enough, Bruno followed Harris into that liberal darkness. Some midnight train, throbbing westward, bore him out of his dream city, with his bursting bags and his books, to trail new adventures. Book stalls flecked with odd numbers of his publication kept faint memories of him alive. But his garret had fallen and the Village changed from the irresponsible Bohemian community, where men and women starved for a dream, to a realtor's plot to make money by commercializing its romantic reputation.

After Bruno left, nothing could stop this commercialization. Bruno had shed a sweet, misty glamour over the colonial streets. He made the Village a Viennese spot where mellow loves felt the moist coolness of autumn winds and spring blossomed into flowery song and mirth. It was a gay, mad, sad, bad affair which had for a moment glittered before the world which seeks relief from its ledgers and hammers in spurts of song and threads of marvellous dream. It is always interested in people daring enough to live their dream.

III

One speculates on what happens to poets when they cease to weep in public and their laughter no longer shakes the china cups that hang from the mantel. Since Bruno vanished, the Village has been less gay, less romantic. True, great figures inhabit its shells of brick and brownstone. The literary tradition is embracing the Village as a center of free lancing in the arts. Revels still take place in taverns where pianos clang-bang and saxophones pour out notes which writhe snakily among gliding feet.

The cult of bobbed hair, and cubist painting, and batiks is still powerful. Clivette is gone, and others with him. But the *Quill* has waxed prosperous under Harrison's hand, an electric sign flashing the radiant come-on to the thriftless sightseers who are snared into things by their flair for the romantic and the incredible.

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The alleys are lined with bookstores and jewelry shops. Perhaps, somewhere, amid these ancient houses there resides a booster club, hatching Napoleonic plans for putting the Village on the map. The ragged poets—hungry troubadours of gray streets—have taken their ukuleles elsewhere. They sing with the wheat harvest and know the backache that crawls nightly along the spine of the West Virginia coal miner. But they stay no more in the Village, where opulent merchants make excursions into the arts and snobs inhabit elegant apartments, leaving them to face the cold of cracked garrets as well as frigid faces that show a lack of interest in poets who have no knickers and don't use the lingo of the golf links.

IV

Yes, the Village has fallen into disrepair ever since it was patched and made to look like new. The Village was never meant to be renewed. Its destiny was to moulder into final and inevitable decay. Like an old musician, it was to melt out of existence, its tone mellower and riper and deeper each day.

But, alas, with the modern improvements that have come in, the Village has become once again a youngster in its abbreviated pantaloons. It has lost that indefinable mellowness which is acquired only through time and suffering. Modernity peeks out in the new eruption of buildings that is rising, casting the old into the shade.

Bruno has gone, perhaps, in time. One wonders where he is now—dreaming romance into a cluster of houses, sighing wistfulness into drear nights, putting perfume into common streets. Where is this implacable romanticist weaving anew the web of his newest dream? Where is he suffering the pangs of crucifixion or measuring a hearty bumper with some sturdy farmer, singing a song of pumpkins and cider?

Does his sorrowing ghost ever haunt MacDougal Street and Washington Square? Does it hover in the dimness of the Mews or chuckle with the cabbage and garlic merchants whose chatter breaks through the smells that urge the visitor to walk faster through the throngs that fill Bleecker Street with riotous colors? I wonder!

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THE HISTORY OF THEIR BOOKS

IV. ARTHUR TRAIN

by Arthur Bartlett Maurice

PROBABLY no other popular American story teller of our day has been so conspicuously associated with the *roman à clef,* or novel with a key, as Arthur Train. There is said to be in existence a complete set of the works of Guy de Maupassant that was once owned by Maupassant himself, in which he had jotted down in the margins the real names of the various characters against the names they bore when converted to the uses of fiction. Once upon a time, about the New York law courts, and in Pontin's old restaurant in Franklin Street, where, at the noon hour, opposing counsels who a few minutes before had been wrangling in the heat of battle were wont to share amicably the same luncheon table, there were to be found men who claimed that, given the stories of Arthur Train, they could supply fully the same kind of annotation, tell who was the real Rufus Kayne of *His Children's Children,* who was John Graham of *The Needle's Eye* and, near at hand, point out the venerable and benevolent Mr. Tutt in the life.

In a few cases they would probably have been right; in more cases they would have been decidedly in error. Rarely does the trained and efficient literary workman draw from a single model; he combines two or three models, taking a physical trait from one or an experience from another. The hero of *The Needle's Eye* is an excellent illustration of this method. Some readers recognized a Morgan; others, a Rockefeller. Actually, the character was a combination of the two. When planning the book Mr. Train had several talks with Mr. Rockefeller about big finance and the relations of capital and labor. When it came to the writing of the story the hero became a young Rockefeller, confronted with Rockefeller problems, sitting at a desk in the J. P. Morgan offices; in other words, a Rockefeller as heir apparent of the house of Morgan.

The underlying theme of *The Needle's Eye* which, incidentally, was begun with the title, "Wealth", is the irreconcilable struggle between capital and labor. As a preliminary to the writing, Mr. Train made an exhaustive first-hand study of the bituminous coal situation. Materialism is the theme of *His Children's Children.* There, too, there was an almost instantaneous recognition of the Kayne family as the Vanderbilt family. Although Mr. Train drew freely upon incidents associated with certain members of that family, he did not have the Vanderbilts definitely in mind. To cement the popular belief, however, the hand of Hollywood reached across the continent. When Mr. Train was in Europe the screen rights of *His Children's Children* were bought by a moving picture company. About the same time the old W. K. Vanderbilt house on Fifth Avenue, one block above St. Patrick's Cathedral, passed into the hands of a banking organization. The moving picture company rented the premises for

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a day from the banking organization and sent a corps of photographers to take pictures that were widely exploited as "the scene of *His Children's Children*".

Justice was the underlying theme of *The Blind Goddess*. Every incident in that novel was based upon some incident that had come under the author's personal observation. In the telling of the story, Mr. Train reversed the usual method. Instead of holding the solution of the mystery for later chapters, he placed the facts before the reader at the beginning and worked out the problem of whether or not justice would eventually prove blind. For *High Winds,* which, despite the verdict of Boston, Mr. Train believes to be the best novel he has so far written, the author went to Paris to make a study of French divorce procedure, particularly in its application to American marriages that had proved uncongenial.

From time to time Mr. Train has drawn a character from a single and definite model Amos Pinchot was introduced by name into *The Butler's Story*. The original of Shiras Graham was Amos F. Eno, the owner of the old Fifth Avenue Hotel. The Vincent Pepperill who appears in many of Mr. Train's novels was in reality John Cadwallader. *The Goldfish* was written from a close study of a man socially and financially prominent in New York a few years ago. For that reason and to avoid a recognition that might have given pain that was not intended, the book was published as the work of an anonymous author. Mr. Train's worry on that score was needless. The original of the hero of that tale, though never quite sure that he himself had been intended, was so delighted with it that he purchased three hundred copies for distribution among his friends.

Mr. Tutt was as gallant a knight of the law courts as any *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche* who in feudal days rode forth in shining armor to fight the battles of the humble and the oppressed! Mentally Mr. Tutt was made up of odds and ends of curi-

ous legal lore; physically, he was the exact counterpart of an amiable, old gentleman who was a fellow member of Mr. Train in the University Club of New York. As there was a real Mr. Tutt, there was also a real Pottsville, that up-state town to which Mr. Tutt repaired for meditation, fishing and incidental chivalrous deeds. The real Pottsville is a village a few miles west of Amsterdam, New York. There the scene is always set with the group of familiar characters ready for use whenever an idea is found for a new Tutt story in bucolic surroundings.

Situations for new Tutt stories are not always readily at hand. For years Mr. Train has had a standing advertisement in The *New York Law Journal* offering one hundred dollars for a suggestion from which a Tutt story may be written. Yet almost invariably he has had to rely upon his own observation or invention. Hundreds of letters have been received from all parts of the country offering a plot or a legal point. Only once was there

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a suggestion that later proved workable. That came on a postal card and consisted of the words, "See reversal statute section so and so". Following up the clue Mr. Train came upon the surprising information that a notary public may make an arrest, and out of that grew the Tutt story, *Saving His Face.*

Every new book calls for more and more preliminary reading and research. His story of last year, *The Horns of Ramadan,* was originally planned as a two part tale; it grew out of the conjunction of the fascination of Morocco and the legends of the Foreign Legion. But as he worked in his room in the Hotel de la Mamounia, in the Red City of Marrakesh, looking up at the peaks of the great Atlas Mountains, the story ran away with him until it assumed the proportions of a full length novel. For his latest novel, *Illusion,* the story of a stage magician, Mr. Train not only read exhaustively on the philosophical side, but personally studied the vaudeville stage and enrolled himself as a member of the Society of American Magicians, becoming what is known as an "illustrious compeer" of that organization.

Carefully planning and thinking out every work in advance, there always comes a time, usually when the book is about three-fifths written, when Mr. Train finds himself at an *impasse,* a kind of mental blindness, when he is unable to proceed farther. Then the task must be laid aside, sometimes for months, to be utterly forgotten and to be renewed with a fresh mind. The most curious history of a story deals with the tale eventually published as *Honor Among Thieves,* in which a district attorney, called to see a prisoner held for forgery, discovers him to be his own long lost and ne'er-do-well brother and is torn between his family obligations and his sworn duty to the State. Seventeen years elapsed between the beginning of that tale and the final writing.

In 1910 Mr. Train went to Italy to study and write about the Camorra trials that were being held at Viberto. He carried with him powerful letters of introduction to the Italian authorities. When his motor car reached the open square just outside of the city gates of Viberto, it stopped, out of gas. Mr. Train left the car, walked across the almost deserted square and into the city to seek for the needed petrol. He returned to find a surging crowd of five thousand surrounding his car, which was in flames. The Camorra had been apprised of his coming and his mission and had set fire to the car. In the conflagration, went letters of introduction, passports, letter of credit and personal belongings. The only bit of paper salvaged was part of the charred manuscript of the first and unfinished draft of *Honor Among Thieves.* For twelve years it lay in Mr. Train's studio in Mount Desert, Maine. One day the solution came. It was simply a matter of turning the story inside out.

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A COMMENTARY

by Rebecca West

London, February.

THERE is, I assure you, quite a good deal going on in England in the literary way just now. It will probably be difficult for American readers to realize this, for the reason that, most unfortunately, there has never been a time when more extraordinary critical recommendations have been made by the great. Any American reader who believed what some of our pundits tell us and accepted Mr. R. H. Mottram as our leading new novelist would be bound to consider that our country was far behind the United States in literary promise; since he is obviously no more than a pleasant and capable exponent of a familiar and not distinguished point of view. But these recommendations are the result of a historical accident. There is now, due to the very slowly emergent consequences of the war, a clean-cut division between the young and old minds. The books which are liked by people under forty are, as a general rule, not the same as the books which are liked by people over fifty; and this means that some of the older writers find themselves diminishing in importance at an alarming rate—a reverse of fortune unprecedented in any other age among living authors of similar eminence. Their reaction to this often takes the form of over-praise of work done in the old manner (which is naturally followed by second-rate and timid minds) and under-praise of work done in the new manner (which is naturally followed by first-rate and audacious minds). I have at my table at the moment a novel which bears on its wrapper a fervent recommendation signed by a very great name in English letters. It is the stodgiest conceivable compilation of insignificant adventures, a little sister to a bread poultice. But it might have been written in 1900; and that is how it earned its recommendation. For this reason the foreigner may get a false conception of English literature as being incredibly tame and exhausted.

* * *

Yet, in fact, all sorts of extraordinary things are happening, as I realized the other Sunday afternoon when I fell into the icy darkness of the Savoy Theatre and remained there for four hours, witnessing one of the most star-crossed dress rehearsals I have ever seen, because I could not bear to leave before the end of a play called "Journey's End", by a new writer, Mr. R. C. Sherriff. I went there because of the urgent representations of John van Druten, who had seen the play at its trial performance by the Stage Society and who swore that never had he heard dialogue that was so successfully written in the manner in which the young lions desire to write dialogue. There he was a little wrong—for what Mr. Sheriff does is to write dialogue as all lions, young or old, desire to write it. There is not one line which is not

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strictly relevant to the situation which provokes it and which is not absolutely realistic; and there is not one line which does not illuminate the character of the person who speaks it. The dress rehearsal was, as I have said, incredibly unfortunate. There were incredible *longueurs,* when scenes were stopped while a tutelary deity named Jim was invoked because there was no mug on the table when the play could not go on unless there was a mug on the table; or another tutelary deity called George, whose lair was in the roof, was begged to make a dawn when dawn should be, but would not. They are, I think, the same tutelary deities that have the circumstances of my own life in charge. But, no matter how serenely Jim and George continued to prefer chaos, how playfully chill caught hold of one's toes, the play was indestructible. Its authority maintained itself through all the interruptions like a beautiful and massive bridge seen through morning mists.

The material is the life of five officers in a dug-out during forty-eight hours in the fourth year of the war; and it is simply that. In the first act there is a rag of plot, and not a very good one. It happens that a Company Officer, a boy of twenty-one, has a young officer, fresh from home, sent out to his platoon and this officer turns out to be a boy of eighteen who was his devoted worshipper at school and is the brother of his fiancée. As the Company Officer has taken to drink to keep himself going after three years of the agony in the trenches, this is to him the worst calamity that could have happened. His drink-crazed brain becomes obsessed with a fear that the boy will write home to his sister and tell the truth, and it seems for a time that the play may turn into a new version of the Uriah, the Hittite, tragedy, until the author decides that it was the cat that brought in this plot and it is the cat that must carry it out. The rest of the play (exercising, of course, selection, but not introducing one shred of extraneous matter) simply tells what happened in an officer's raid during the preparation for a big attack. The routine is described and nothing but the language of routine is used; but the pearls of the Indies could make the effect no richer. There is one scene where a middle-aged officer sits with the boy of eighteen while they are waiting to go over the top on a hopeless raid, and the older man talks to the boy to distract his nerves, cradling him in his kindness. Alas! poor Zoe Akins! Alas! all dramatists who believe in the picturesque and excitant subject! Strew your stage with palpitant Ethel Barrymores and flood your back-drop with a terrible light from the sunset of prodigious fornications, and still you shall not wake in our hearts one tithe of the emotion that we felt as we listened to these men in drab suits talking clipped and trite sentences to each other in a dark hole in the earth.

* * *

Yet I cannot say that this play is an entirely satisfactory work of art. It is enormously impressive and enormously stirring; and in the matter of dialogue and selection it is beyond praise. But I find that, in my own case and in the case of others who saw this dress rehearsal, it excites rather than satisfies and I fancy this is because its inspiration is neurotic. Decidedly, it is lit by Platonic fires rather than by the sunshine of Apollo. To begin with, it is one more expression of the desperate infantilism of modern young Englishmen. I do not mean by this that his emphasis is on the tragedy of murdered youth, which was war's most unnatural offense, for that is legitimate and most beautifully contrived, particularly at one moment. One had seen the four men sitting in their hell of lice and rats and filth and cold and fatigue and responsibility and fear of sudden death, sombrely rejoicing because there is one coming to lighten their burden by sharing it. He comes. Slowly, he descends the steps into the dug-out, he straightens himself, the

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light from the candles on the table falls on his face, and, behold, it is a child from school! Somebody in the darkness of the theatre half-whispered, half-groaned, "Eleven days!" One wondered why, until it came back to one that that was actually the average duration of a second lieutenant's life in the trenches.

Of such memorable indictments of the world's guilt, one does not complain; but one is disquieted by Mr. Sherriff's assumption that immaturity is the most important phase of existence. The older men in the play are represented as being not only protective to the boys, but deferential, as to people of obviously greater importance; and their references to the lives they have left in England are so perfunctory that one sees that the author himself cannot believe they could conceivably contain matter so exciting and profound as the relationship between the boy of twenty-one and the boy of eighteen, which started at school.

* * *

Now, the significance of this can be seen when one considers that there have been three first-rate plays written by young Englishmen since the war: "Prisoners of War", by J. R. Ackerley, "Young Woodley", by John van Druten, and this "Journey's End". "Prisoners of War" dealt with a group of young men confined in a neutral country and the prolongation of adolescent affections among them owing to the unnatural conditions; "Young Woodley" dealt tragically with the love of a schoolboy for his schoolmaster's wife; "Journey's End" represents a school friendship as dominating the scene in its reality when all the world dissolves into death and disaster. How very odd this is may be judged if one translates these subjects into terms of the female sex. If a woman dramatist were to write plays, solemnly setting forth the frenetic sentimentalities of some isolated group of women who got "raves" on each other as younger schoolgirls do on students in the senior class; or the love of a schoolgirl for her headmistress's husband, to whom she wrote sonnets; or a number of young women, facing sudden and dreadful death, say in the maternity wards of a hospital, who repeatedly harked back to school days and showed that they regarded these as the most important phase of their lives—how very odd we should think her and them. But this clinging to youth is not merely a division of sex, for I find it puzzles and repels older men as much as it does women. Nor is it a peculiarity of the artistic temperament. In all classes in England one finds men who, because they are under forty, behave as if they were wearing their white-muslin gowns and blue sashes. A year or so ago, I went into the office of a business man and commented on a very beautiful silver box lying on his table, which bore an inscription saying that it had been given to him on his twenty-first birthday. He said coyly, "I shouldn't leave it about to give away what a baby I am!" The inscription showed that his twenty-first birthday had taken place seven years before. I must have looked like a goldfish.

* * *

Infantilism is not a happy state. The childhood of the individual and the race is full of fears and panic-stricken attempts to placate the unknown dispensers of the dreaded evil by painful sacrifices. For this reason "Journey's End" is a sad play, sadder even than a play about the war should be. There is a moment when the drink-crazed boy of twenty-one is bullying and torturing the boy of eighteen, in which one feels that the author is enjoying the situation, that the atmosphere is tinged with masochism. A drink-crazed boy is not really to blame, for it is responsibility that has turned him to drink; so one can conceive an infatuated child making excuses for a brutal parent, in order that he may rationalize his own disposition to submit to his brutality, because it is the one and only approach to him. One feels the same despair

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as when one saw Mr. Ackerley writing across this cartoon of adolescence, "Yes, these are nursery squabbles, but I prefer them to adult life!" or Mr. van Druten's unconscious pleasure because young Woodley had had it proved to him that beyond the frontiers of childhood is nothing so delicate as childhood, and was discouraged. This infantilism of young England is no joke, and it is no affectation that can be slipped at a moment's notice. For its cause one need not look very far. The process displays itself more candidly in a still younger generation: in, for example, the little boy who year after year refused to learn to read and, under investigation, confided that he did not want to read because reading is a grown-up activity, and he does not want to grow up because grown-up men have to be soldiers. How marvellously war hardens the fibre of a nation!

* * *

Yet, how the human animal survives its misfortunes! That is shown by the Exhibition of Dutch Art at Burlington House, which is as glorious a collection of pictures as ever were housed under one roof before. Reflect that the Duke of Alva dragged the Spanish harrow of cruelty through the Netherlands throughout the second half of the Sixteenth Century; that the Sieges of Leyden and Alkmaar were round about 1573; that the independence of Holland was not effective until 1609; and that it was all such a business of famine and blood and rapine as this world has hardly seen surpassed. Then realize that not a hundred years later the whole immortal crowd of them—Rembrandt, Jan Steen, Frans Hals, De Hooch, Vermeer, Cuyp, Ter Borch and the rest—were painting away as joyously and serenely as if they had never heard of men being other than good fellows, of stomachs being empty and of death arriving before ninety. Historically, the exhibition is astounding. Artistically, it is just such a feast as one's first visit to the Prado in Madrid. The same exultation one feels there at finding enough Valasquez, enough El Greco, enough Goya, for one to get a thorough comprehension of each artist's manner of thinking and feeling, one felt here at seeing enough Rembrandts and enough Vermeers. Especially, the Vermeers. There are here ten out of the forty-one which are all that he ever painted, ten minute and modest pictures of simple things that would outweigh wealth. You have seen shallow pools on the road after rain that have radiantly given back a reflection of blue sky and white sunshine and have wondered that so small a space could hold so much color and light; each of these canvases will make one feel the same. There is also a quality of honesty in the painting, of candor in the analysis of the visual experience which is his subject, of refusal to admit any extraneous matter to make its effect more exciting.

* * *

After spending as long as I could—for the huge rooms are chockablock with people, since the English have, oddly enough, the greatest regard for the art in which they are least proficient—before the "View of Delft" I went home and took down from my shelf Marcel Proust's *La Prisonnière* and read again the description of Bergotte's death. (Bergotte, you remember, was Anatole France.)

Because of a slight attack of uræmia his doctors had told him to rest. But a critic having said that in the "View of Delft" by Ver Meer (lent by the Museum of The Hague for a Dutch Exhibition) a picture that he adored and thought he knew quite well, there was a tiny bit of yellow wall (which he did not remember) which was so exquisitely painted that it was, if one looked at it by itself, of a self-sufficing beauty like a Chinese work of art, Bergotte ate some potatoes, went out, and visited the Exhibition. As soon as he got to the first steps that he had to climb, he was seized with giddiness. He passed in front of several pictures and had an impression of the staleness and futility of

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such a factitious art, which could make nothing equal to the breezes and sun of a Venetian palace or a simple house by the sea. At last he came to the Ver Meer which he remembered more brilliant, more different from everything he knew, but in which, thanks to the critic's article, he remarked for the first time that there were certain little people in blue, that the gravel was pink, and moreover that there was indeed this tiny bit of yellow wall. His giddiness increased: he fixed his eye, like a child who sees a yellow butterfly that it wants to catch, on the bit of yellow wall. "That is how I ought to have written," he said. "My last books are too dry. I ought to have laid on several coats of color, to have made my sentence a beautiful thing in itself, like that bit of yellow wall." Meanwhile, he was not blind to the seriousness of his attack of giddiness. There appeared to him in a heavenly balance, weighing down one of the scales, his own life, while the other one contained the bit of yellow wall that had been so well painted. He felt he had rashly exchanged the first for the second. "I wouldn't like," he said to himself, "to be among the miscellaneous news of this Exhibition in the evening papers."

He repeated to himself: "A little bit of yellow wall with a shed, a little bit of yellow wall!" Meanwhile he had sunk on to a circular divan; quite suddenly he stopped thinking that life was a game, and, hurrying back to optimism, said to himself, "This is simply indigestion that I've got from underdone potatoes, it isn't anything". A new attack overcame him, he rolled off the divan to the ground, and all the visitors and the custodians hurried up to him. He was dead.

This is a passage that is packed full of information. It conveys to one the essential qualities of Anatole France, which are an over-intellectualized disposition to twist everything into amusing and arresting patterns, rather than tell the truth about it, and a capacity for perfection greater than his loyalty to it. It is all very well for our novelists to show us the patterns life twists itself into, but aren't we rather neglecting the texture of life? It is one of the key-passages in modern literature, on which one could base a year's thinking and reading and picture-seeing.

* * *

Watching, in print or in canvas or in real life, the proceedings of artists is so interesting that I wonder we can ever keep our minds on anything else. There came to London the other day Maurice Ravel, to conduct a concert of his own works. It was not altogether a success, for reasons connected with his temperament. There is something very resistant about all his music. It is as if he said, "Yes, there is an infinite deal of music sounding in my ears, but I do not greatly believe in its importance. I will not encourage it by recording it, for I prefer that there should be silence so far as possible"; and as if certain strains insisted on being written down by force of their reality and beauty, and he had to give way because his exquisite taste perceived the soundness of their claim, but pruned and cut back what he could. When he stood up before his orchestra, a tiny silver-haired man looking like a very small Cairn terrier, it was obvious that this same attitude made him one of the world's worst conductors. He would not hold his orchestra together. He would not help his singer by the marking of a bar-line. If the music was to make its point, it had to do so by itself. One witnessed the singular spectacle of one of the most distinguished of European composers showing the most invincible hostility towards sound, even though it was dictated by himself.

Then . . . one went to a party given for M. Ravel by the amiable Gordon Bryan, the pianist. There three people played Brahms Spanish Dances and Wagner's "Valkyrie" music on two pianos while twenty people blew whistles and banged tambourines and beat drums and hit triangles; and ever and anon the host shouted, "Make more noise! A lot more noise!" Why? Because that is what M. Ravel loves to hear, after he has given a concert!

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There has leaked out during the last month a piece of news that has made intellectual London laugh louder and longer than anything that has happened in a long time. When *The Well of Loneliness* case came before the magistrate on the last occasion, it was reported in the newspapers that Mr. Rudyard Kipling had been present in court but had left as soon as it was announced that no expert evidence of writers on the point of the obscenity of the work involved was going to be heard. It was immediately taken for granted that he had attended to give evidence in favor of Miss Radclyffe Hall and say that the book was not obscene. There were two reasons why quite sensible people leapt to this conclusion. The first was that only the defense had announced its intention of calling such witnesses. The second was that, in spite of his political silliness, Mr. Kipling has from time to time shown signs of grace; (he has, for example, never accepted the title which has been offered to him again and again with fervent demonstrations from high places) and it would not have been surprising if he had made a stand for the principle of liberty here involved. He very well might, since in his last book of short stories is included a story (one of the finest he has ever written) which candidly transcribed a conversation between two old ladies who in their youth were as Walt Whitman wished to be, were like the animals, did not whine and speak of their sons, and in their age were not ashamed; a story which he hardly could have published had not certain low fellows like Thomas Hardy and H. G. Wells and D. H. Lawrence gone to some pains to stretch the public's tolerance. But it has recently emerged that the common assumption was wrong, that he attended to give evidence, not for the book but against it, and that the prosecution had another witness up its sleeve, who was . . . the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is that which has been too much for London's gravity. The thought of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the ineffably stately head of the Anglican communion, entering the witness box in a police court to discourse on the manners and customs of Miss Radclyffe Hall, is just more than my depleted countrymen can bear. The Archbishop is Scotch, a septuagenarian and unmarried. No touch is lacking.

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EUGENE O'NEILL AND OTHERS

by Ernest Boyd

Since this chronicle last appeared the most important event in the New York theatre has been the production by the Theatre Guild of Eugene O'Neill's "Dynamo". It was important, not only because Mr. O'Neill is the foremost American dramatist of today but, also, because of its reception at the hands of the dramatic critics, who were almost unanimous in rendering an adverse verdict. For the first time, I think, since his rise to fame Mr. O'Neill has been strictly scrutinized, tried and found wanting. Before describing the play, I shall quote the author's own statement of his intentions:

"Dynamo" is a symbolical and factual biography of what is happening in a large section of the American (and not only American) soul right now. It is really the first play of a trilogy that will dig at the roots of the sickness of today as I feel it—the death of an old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around on the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlor entertainer. . . . The other two plays will be "Without Ending of Days" and "It Cannot Be Mad".

Now the play itself. The first act shows us the interiors of two houses side by side. One is the home of a Fundamentalist preacher who resents the lust of the flesh which caused his marriage, and whose wife similarly resents the urge which draws their son to a pretty girl next door. The other is the home of an impenitent atheist, parent of the girl in question, whose wife also fails to induce in him the feelings appropriate to happy domesticity. The members of these two households are shown simultaneously preoccupied with their individual cares. Chief of these are the atheist's desire to expose the preacher, the girl's desire to attract the boy, his desire for her and his mother's rage thereat. The atheist and the girl succeed. By a trick the boy is turned against God and his parents and departs filled with atheistical hysteria.

When he returns the two houses are as before, save that his mother has died of grief over his absence. The girl is more alluring than ever, in accordance with the proverb about absence, and the atheist father is still sneering sardonically at the "Bible boobs". He gives the youth a job in the power house of which he is the superintendent. The result is disastrous. The budding atheist has developed in Act III a violent, mystic passion for the dynamo, for the Great God Electricity. He has got to the point of regarding his love for the girl as a form of blasphemy, a crime which he must expiate, and has reduced her mother to an equally abject, if less eloquent, worship of the dynamo. But he gets as little satisfaction out of his new cult as he did out of the old, for he shoots his girl and hurls himself onto

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the dynamo and is electrocuted. Not, however, until many words have been uttered to and about the electric deity.

Such is Mr. O'Neill's conception of the eternal struggle between the religious and the scientific instinct. That, he implies, is not mere "scribbling around on the surface of things". Yet, it would be difficult to find a more superficial and juvenile presentation of the situation than his. Mr. George Jean Nathan, in *The American Mercury,* has carefully listed the stage directions of Act I and shows their relationship to the cheapest melodrama. He has likewise culled some choice passages of dialogue about God, which is precisely on the level of the village atheist, dialogue of the If-God-exists-why-doesn't-He-strike-me-dead order. Neither the excellent acting of Mr. Glenn Anders, Miss Claudette Colbert and Mr. Dudley Digges nor the fine production could conceal the essential shallowness and adolescent pretentiousness of the play.

It has always seemed to me that Eugene O'Neill's strength lies in his capacity for feeling and projecting onto the stage simple, elemental emotions. When he attempts to treat ideas dramatically he is lost. The one moving scene in "Dynamo" is that in the first act, when the boy is tricked and loses his beliefs while the girl is half amused and half horrified by the process to which he is being subjected. Mr. O'Neill has the power to do that sort of thing as nobody else in the American theatre has. He has an essentially dramatic imagination, out of which he created all those early plays which are still his masterpieces. The cycle of the "S.S. Glencairn", which was recently shown at the Garrick Theatre, is worth all the author's so-called intellectual plays.

I recall "Welded" as the first of his plays in which I detected this desire to intellectualize what the author obviously had felt and visualized intensely but had never thought out. Two people nagging each other may be a fair enough picture of many marriages, but their altercations cannot be offered as a contribution to the marriage problem or as a philosophy of married life. In "The Great God Brown" one was exasperated by the use of masks, which could so easily have been dispensed with—and were actually forgotten at times—had it not been for the fact that Mr. O'Neill clearly imagined that this device was somehow intellectual and profound. "Strange Interlude", of course, is enwrapped in so many novel stunts that it is impossible to say what the author would have made of the same idea if he had presented it in an orthodox form and at ordinary length. For my own part, I do not feel that the intellectual quality of the play is its chief merit.

Mr. O'Neill is determined to be a serious thinker, not a mere "parlor entertainer". His dialogue is to be "Interludism". To neither of these ambitions can there be any objection, provided he can make them dramatically effective in the theatre. The subject of the projected trilogy is one which has been stated in terms of drama before, but Mr. O'Neill has not succeeded in doing so.

In its day "Serena Blandish, or the Difficulties of Getting Married", by "A Lady of Quality", proved to be a more successful novel than any of the books which the author had published over the pseudonym of "Enid Bagnold". In the dramatized version of Mr. Behrman it provided a fairly diverting entertainment, thanks largely to the efforts of Miss Ruth Gordon, Miss Constance Collier and Mr. Henry Daniell. Some of the harsher humors, if that be the word, of the novel had disappeared and Miss Gordon made of Serena a wide-eyed and essentially "nice" girl who somehow never knew how to play her cards properly. The carnalities which were, as I recall it, the undoing of the original heroine, did not loom very large in the play. When Mr. A. E. Matthews, as the philosophical butler, remarked that young ladies who stay to tea when invited to lunch do not get married, one did not gather that anything untoward had happened in that extended interval—which was one of the most amusing scenes in the

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play, when we were permitted to witness the lapse of Lord Ivor Cream into his accustomed boredom, while Serena is still hopeful of some happy issue to her prolonged visit.

Some day, doubtless, a learned thesis will be written upon the effects of lingerie upon the Anglo-Saxon soul in general and the Anglo-Saxon theatre in particular. Havelock Ellis, *à propos* of Gaby Deslys, once broached the subject gently. In Forty-second Street they are not so subtle and know why a step-in may add charm to a musical show, but may mean padlocks and the patrol-wagon in a straight comedy, as witness the arrest of the cast of "My Girl Friday". Yet, a few doors away, "Harlem", an "episode in the life of New York's Black Belt", presented by a Negro cast, assisted by one white detective, did not scruple to show what everybody knows who has visited the dance halls of that now fashionable district. What gave the performance its interest was not its melodramatic plot, but the acting, which justified the claim that Negroes have a natural bent that way, for of art there was no sign. A young lady, perhaps better known to the initiated than to me, Miss Isabell Washington, impersonated a potential Lulu Belle in a manner which made the performance of Miss Lenore Ulric look like that of a Sunday school teacher.

"Let Us Be Gay" is Miss Rachel Crothers in an amusing vein of light comedy. A marriage dissolves before our eyes in Act I and the victims meet some years later, when the wife is called upon to vamp the husband away from a young woman whose relatives would reserve her for better things. The confrontation of the sundered couple obviously offers opportunity for the Comic Spirit and, helped by Miss Francine Larrimore and Miss Charlotte Granville, the author secures her effects. I recommend this effort to those who think that "sophisticated" comedy is a purely English invention, that Gerrard double-two-double-one is a smarter effect than Rhinelander two-two-one-one.

Mr. A. A. Milne has an extraordinary talent for making plays out of next to nothing. The initial idea seldom seems capable of lasting more than one scene, but, shortly before eleven, one discovers that he has lured one along through three acts. Such is "Meet the Prince", with Miss Mary Ellis and Mr. Basil Sydney in the principal parts. All that the author wishes to show is an adventurer masquerading as a prince, who is threatened with exposure by the wife he has deserted, threatens to expose her for pretending to be the wife of a general and is finally reconciled to her. Slender; nothing happens. Yet, it trips along amusingly. There are even flashes of good satire in the description of the prince's imaginary kingdom.

Musical entertainments in the Shubert theatres accumulate. At the Majestic "Pleasure Bound", with Phil Baker, Jack Pearl, Aileen Stanley and Shaw and Lee. But for Mr. Baker and Messrs. Shaw and Lee, it would not be so tolerable. As it is, it will please those who do not always insist upon having the best, especially if they have already seen the best of this season. As an alternative, there is "Boom Boom", in which Frank McIntyre and Jeannette MacDonald are featured, but where it all depends upon the chorus and dance numbers. Miss Nell Kelly tries hard to live up to the theory that she is another Zelma O'Neill, but disproves it. On the other hand, in Mr. Lyle D. Andrews's production of "Lady Fingers" there is a young woman named Marjorie White, who scores a hit with "Ga-Ga" and who promptly reminded the cognoscenti of Miss O'Neill and Miss Helen Kane—not a bad combination for the cognoscenti to remember.

A French musical comedy company flitted across the scene and is now doubtless at work once more in the French provinces, where it properly belonged. Fond memory brought the light of seaside casinos of twenty years ago around me. It was too ingenuous for harsh comment. But someone ought to explain to the French that New York is really quite an up-to-date city, theatrically speaking.

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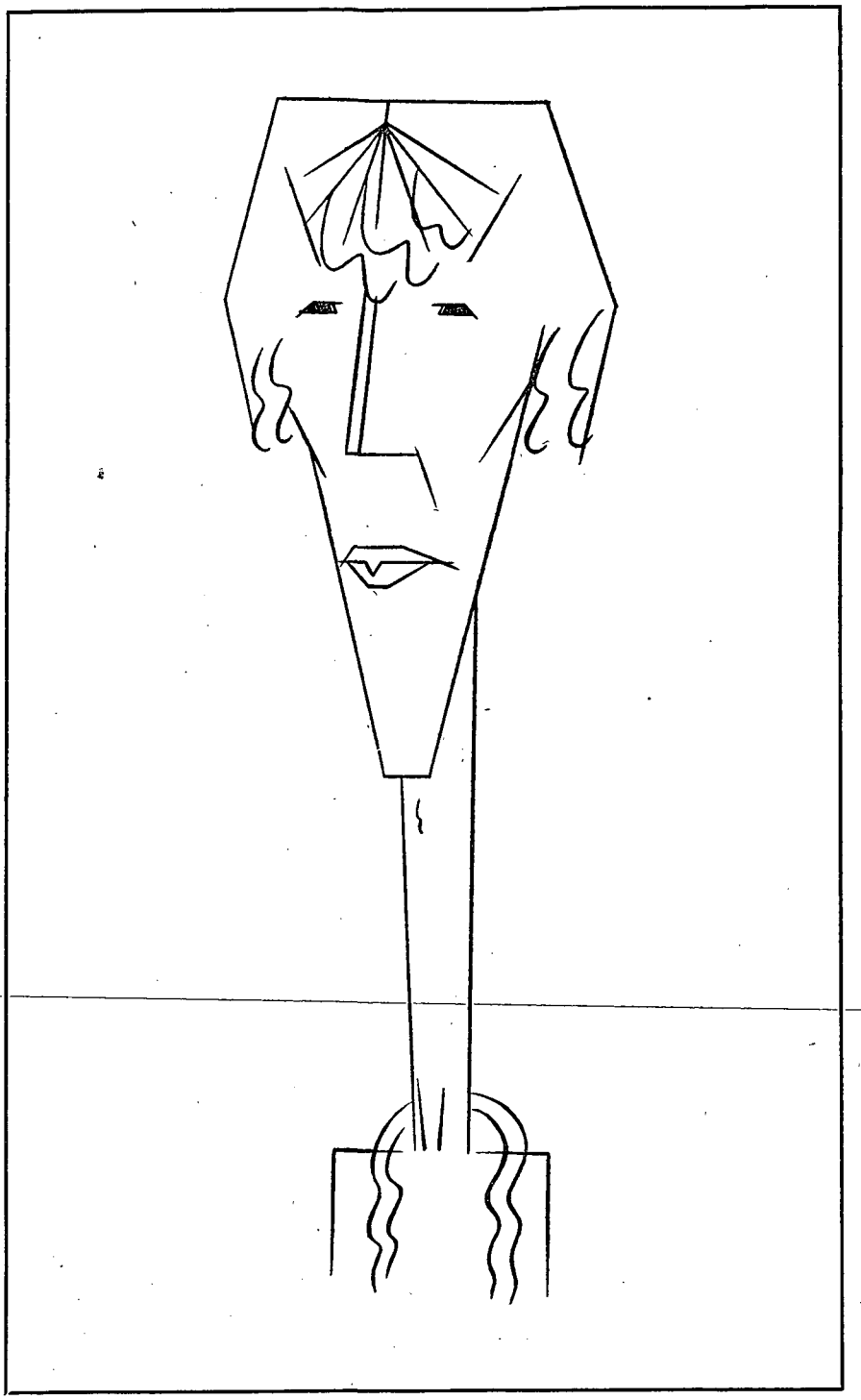

MAZO DE LA ROCHE

Caricature by Eva Herrmann

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A NEW LIFE OF MELVILLE

by Archibald MacLeish

HERMAN MELVILLE *by Lewis Mumford*
(HARCOURT, BRACE; $2.50)

THIS is a book (there is no use writing around the fact) which it is almost impossible to judge. It is a good book. It is the work of a scholarly and generous mind. It is patently on the side of the angels. It deserves attention even in a critic-ridden land like America where, for each page of creative writing, there are pounds of comment, and serious literature is largely made up of what those who do not write think about those who do. And yet, and in spite of all these things, it is dull. It sinks. And there is no explanation. The content weighs the book. One has the impression that Mr. Mumford sketched out an enormous graph before he started, like a child's blank outline map, and then, whether he would or no, went on to fill it. Those sections which interested him he has filled in brilliantly. Those which did not interest him he has filled in nevertheless. Not only everything in Melville's life but everything that critic traditions could possibly require of a critic, classification of works, economic and psychological explanation of spiritual states, growth and decay according to the laws of genius, all are there.

So far as Melville is concerned he remains at the end of the book what he was at the beginning, the author of *Moby Dick*. But if Mr. Mumford has not succeeded in making of Melville a man of letters, an author of many books, a fine writer, he has not, for that reason, failed with his hero. He has left *Moby Dick*, and Melville as the man who wrote it, in a position which future appreciation and criticism will hardly improve. In a position which, with one important reservation, Melville would have wished to take. (It is not presumptuous to say so for the man's wish so clearly appears.) The pages in which Mr. Mumford deals with the meaning of that book are magnificent. "*Moby Dick* . . . is fundamentally a parable on the mystery of evil and the accidental malice of the universe. . . . The whole tale of the West, in mind and action, in the philosophy and art of the Greeks, in the organization and technique of the Romans, in the precise skills and unceasing spiritual quests of the modern man, is a tale of this effort to combat the whale—to ward off his blows, to counteract his aimless thrusts, to create a purpose that will offset the empty malice of Moby Dick." It is not necessary to agree with Mr. Mumford's variations upon, and applications of, the theme, to praise his understanding of it. It is not necessary to agree, and certainly I do not, that *Moby Dick* offers, or was intended to offer, a solution of the problem, artistic or otherwise. The point of importance is that Mr. Mumford makes the whole book swing from the sense of foreboding, the hostility of man to the blind and accidental malice of the universe, the hatred of chance, and so restores to

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it the power and the glory its fashionable admirers of the last decade had taken away.

The significance of Romanticism and its *alter ego,* Modernism, lies in the relation of the consciousness to the external world. The human spirit seems to pass through periods, as insects do, of cocoon building, and periods of the breaking of cocoons. Worlds are spun within worlds and men inhabit a perfect and protecting weatherproof of impervious ideas. They are safe and sure. They lead beautiful lives. They permit themselves a poetry of common sense and a painting of imitation. And then, due to some mortality in the nature of ideas, or some inability of faith to hold these ideas, the fabric breaks. Instead of the snug, close sky, printed over with the nomenclature of the well-known constellations, there is night. And men observe that they are surrounded by an unknown and mysterious universe over which they have no power. And they pity themselves. Or they dramatize their emotions. Or they face the darkness. Or they set to work, metaphysicians in one generation, theologians in another, "scientists" in ours, to rebuild the inner universe of names and shut the sky out. In our time one world is broken, has been broken for a hundred years. Another is building, has been built to the eye-height of the great majority of men so that they believe their heads are covered, or will soon be covered—Science will know it all soon: it will soon be known. A few, and those the men most characteristic of our time, are still unhoused. Some are digging among the ruins of the former shell, tilting the slabs of faith up, praising the intellectual elegance of those safer men. Some are nosing at the new cement, wondering what sand will make it stick. But all of them are naked to the air, and to these men, like a written stone found on the promontories of an uninhabitable land, the voice of Melville comes with almost unendurable meaning. The knowledge of evil in the world. The stumbling malice. The brute chance. They, too, have known it and spoken and been spat upon by the new-roofed fellows with their plaster facts and their watts and kilos and their safe, sure incomes from their six percents. The cosmopolitan, Semitic pseudo-Gallicized, ironical, sophisticated, giggling spirit of our time knows nothing of that terror and shrieks with spiteful laughter when the words are said. "There is," wrote Melville, "a certain tragic phase of humanity which, in our opinion, was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne. . . . He says No in thunder; but the devil himself cannot make him say Yes. For all men who say yes, lie. . . ."

It is a wonderful thing that Mr. Mumford, after all this, should have felt himself obliged to deal with the economic and new-psychology explanation of Melville's "blackness". Is it impossible to convince even an honest and loving biographer of sincerity? *Moby Dick* is not a mood nor a fairy tale. It is the kind of truth few men are able to put in words. And the whole explanation of Melville's state of mind is there. There is nothing more that he or any other man can say. To write as Mr. Mumford does: ". . . in Melville's life we are aware of tangible reasons for his frustration, with roots that reach far back into childhood, his disappointed youth, the hardships of early poverty and defeated expectations . . . his perpetual feeling of being an Ishmael, through poverty among the gentlefolk at Albany, etc., etc." is to do Melville little honor. I hardly think Mr. Mumford, whose courage I have no reason to doubt, would care to face Melville himself with that page. It sounds like the young New York critic who disposed of one of the most moving tragic poems of our time by remarking that the author had plenty to eat and a nice wife and must be putting it all on. Nothing has been more destructive of artistic dignity, nothing has more muddily hidden the true nature of works of art, than the criticism which explains it all from the inside or from the outside or from before or from behind. Shakespeare and the author of the Book of Job are alone fortunate.

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Their work is estimated perforce for what it is.

Both this attempt to explain Melville and the attempt to classify the book, *Moby Dick*, are strange, the second only less so than the first. Mr. Mumford starts out bravely enough. We abandon the "false categories". "*Moby Dick* stands by itself. . . ." *Moby Dick* is not a novel but then it never tried to be a novel. All this is very fine. Mr. Mumford might well have gone on to say that *Moby Dick* is not a novel and so much the worse for the novel. If the only characteristic of the novel as a form is its exclusion of certain forms of expression which are not the novel, then better out than in. But the critic is not willing to let the book he criticizes stand alone. He is under an obscure compulsion to name it. Above all he is obliged to make of it a "work of art". And Mr. Mumford, in spite of his original protestation, yields to the tradition of his calling, and gives the book a name. It is a "poetic epic". "Mr. Percy Boynton has performed the interesting experiment of transporting a paragraph in *Pierre* into excellent free verse . . . and one might gather a whole book of verse from *Moby Dick*."

The brief answer to this capitulation, and without apologies, is that *Moby Dick* is *not* a poem. And nothing shows the essential prosiness of our age so clearly as the fact that one of our best critics can call it one, even in its parts, even between layers of prose. The epithet gains us nothing. The book is there as Melville wrote it and as Melville intended it. It is a great and beautiful book. But it is not poetry. There still remain, however hard to define, differences between poetry and prose and now more than ever, it seems, is it necessary to maintain them. To dump a great work of imaginative prose into poetry because it won't fit anywhere else is not a very profitable proceeding, and to reprint prose passages in short lines with capitals is an experiment which could hardly interest seriously anyone out of a class in English composition. This passage in Mr. Mumford's book is exceptionable for a variety of reasons. It is out of place in the fine and serious treatment of *Moby Dick* which it interrupts. It is the kind of thing which has been said of volumes like *Moby Dick* before and by critics of far less intelligence than Mr. Mumford. And it is particularly unfortunate here because Melville did, later in his life, write poetry which he caused to be printed as such. It was not good poetry.

These objections go to the best part of Mr. Mumford's book. They are serious objections but they admit the real success of those chapters. What they amount to is a complaint that Mr. Mumford has not accepted completely his own admiration for *Moby Dick*, and Melville as its author, but has attempted to explain and locate both. The rest of the book is made up of biography, criticism and a running sketch of the American scene as a background. The latter sections are always interesting and frequently brilliant. Melville as an American of his time is Mr. Mumford's real contribution. The lapses into dullness occur for the most part in the criticism of the lesser volumes, which not even Mr. Mumford can restore to any semblance of life, and in the purely biographical sections where a kind of literary film often blurs the fact. One comes to the end of the book puzzled and somewhat unconvinced. It seems ungrateful to praise half-heartedly such honest and intelligent work. Certainly every reader of Melville will be debtor to Mr. Mumford's book for years to come. And yet one feels that Mr. Mumford could have written a better book—did write a better book and then submerged it under weight it would not bear.

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TRANSLATING THE ORIENT

by Witter Bynner

POETRY OF THE ORIENT: AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE CLASSIC SECULAR POETRY OF THE MAJOR EASTERN NATIONS. *Edited by Eunice Tietjens.* (KNOPF. $5.00)

ONE eagerly picks up Eunice Tietjens's selection of translated *Poetry of the Orient*—the Orient meaning this time Arabia, Persia, Japan, China and India. One reads thirty-four pages of excellent introduction and two hundred and eighty-five pages of verse. Coming at last to fourteen appended pages of bibliography, one marvels after all more at the editor's patience than at the genius of the poets she has assembled. Out of half a world comes a pittance of poetry. It is not her fault. By dint of long and close watching she has doubtless felt, despite the clumsiness of translators, the power or validity of the originals. Related to one section of her book, the Chinese, I have myself read many volumes of translation; and, knowing from association with a Chinese scholar the value of the originals, I have sighed at the paucity of what comes through to us in English from a golden source. The best translations available of Oriental poetry are probably from the Chinese, as she herself says. What painful tedium must she have gone through in English volumes from the other countries, before she could offer us this winnowing! She deserves no end of praise for her hard work.

The only honest approach to a volume like this is to the translators and not to the original poets. One can imagine Shakespeare mauled beyond belief by a translator into the Sanskrit and Eddie Guest made sublime. Miss Tietjens properly indicates in each section those poets whom their own countrymen hold in highest esteem; but she cannot indicate, through the translators at her disposal for evidence, the reasons therefor. Interestingly enough, the essence of greatness does not come through. Perhaps those critics are right who hold that the substance of human thinking is very much the same in all countries and all times and only of outstanding importance in accordance with the degree of art in language controlled by the expressor. A book of this sort most certainly weighs on the side of the contender for form as the more important half of literary matter. Again and again, in reading these classics from old literature, written originally in language beyond our ken, one is aware of noble enough human matter even through ignoble expression in our own language. Will a thorough reading of the book bear us out in this surmise? Let us read and see.

Imru-al-Kais does not emerge in translation as, concededly, the greatest of the earlier Arabs. His poems in fact make dull English, even the one suspended with six by other authors as the "Seven Golden Poems" in the temple at Mecca. So do the other six, in so far as we are allowed to know them. None of the Arabian poems written before

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the time of Mohammed, though we have our editor's word for their simple virility, conveys much in English. We feel the horses and camels slightly, but not the poetry. After Mohammed, when the wild, free spirit had given way in literary Arabia to a moralistic consciousness, we find this translation by Henry Baerlein from Abu'l-Atahiya of the Eighth Century:

> Full is my sorrow now that you are dead,
> And I have thrown the dust upon your head.
> In other days I preached unendingly,
> But now, my little boy, you preach to me.

J. D. Carlyle translates from a Syrian Arab, Ibn al-Rumi (died 894 A.D.) this proof that Mohammed had not banished wit:

> So careful is Isa and anxious to last,
> So afraid of himself is he grown,
> He swears thro' two nostrils the breath goes too fast,
> And he's trying to breathe thro' but one.

Baerlein again proves from Ibn al-Rebii of the Seventh Century that there were Menckens against even Mohammed:

> Traditions have been handed down to me
> That would have had importance, would have had
> But for my powers of credulity,
> Which are so bad.

Edward William Lane translates from the *Arabian Nights* an "Admonition" written six centuries later, an aphorism sufficiently impressive in the present century to be used by Miss Tietjens on her graceful dedicatory page:

> There is no writer that shall not perish; but what his hand hath written endureth forever.
> Write, therefore, nothing but what will please thee when thou shalt see it on the day of judgment.

From the same book comes a gayer bit, "On Wine", the English by Edward Powys Mathers, known to me through his translations from the Chinese to be a flagrant and often wanton embroiderer on smothered texts but in this case deft enough to warrant his probable license:

> There's nothing like the blood of grapes
> To give escapes
> From care's infesting, festering apes.
> To set the wit upon probation,
> To give an edge to conversation,
> To make a friend of a relation,
> There's nothing like the blood of grapes.

Miss Tietjens calls the poetry of Persia the poetry of "world sophistication". Edward Fitzgerald bears out her contention in his quatrains from Omar Khayyám, and Richard Le Gallienne is not far behind as a translator. Here, however, as with the Arabs, the great poets suffer through translation, Omar being, to the Persian mind, "a first-rate astronomer, but not even a third-rate poet". Firdausi of the Ninth Century seems unimportant in English. So do Mu'izzi of the Eleventh Century, Nizami of the Twelfth, Hafiz of the Thirteenth and Saadi of the Thirteenth—though the latter has Sir Edwin Arnold to thank for two couplets:

> I
>
> The counsels of the wise may go awry,
> The fool may hit his mark at the first try.
>
> II
>
> What could he know of sky and stars,
> of heaven's all-hidden life,
> Who did not see in his own house
> the knave that kissed his wife?

Ralph T. H. Griffith happens to conclude a negligible translation from Jami of the Fifteenth Century with these two lines:

> If on the eye of a lover she stepped,
> Her foot would float on the tear he wept.

And so Persia goes by.

In one of her notably compact and yet comprehensive individual prefaces to the five sections of her book, Miss Tietjens prepares the reader for the characteristic brevity and suggestiveness of Japanese poetry, in which the poet's imagination plays chess with the

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reader's. Anyone knowing Japanese poetry through translation, knows Basil Hall Chamberlain's famous *hokku* from the Eighteenth Century painter-poet, Buson:

> Granted this dew-drop world is but
> A dew-drop world—this granted, yet. . . .

When one has read through the Japanese section of this anthology, one has found nothing more memorable, more characteristic and more poignant. Hitomaro, "the greatest of the older poets of Japan", in spite of earnest efforts by Arthur Waley, Curtis Hidden Page and Clara A. Walsh, takes on no stature in English, not even the stature of a dwarf-pine. Waley gives grace to a *tanka* by an unknown author:

> Even for the space of a flash
> Of lightning
> That flashes over the corn-ears
> Of an autumn-field—
> Can I forget you?

Yone Noguchi, despite the unhappy inversion in his last line, cannot destroy the Fifteenth Century Arakida Moritake's *hokku:*

> I thought I saw the fallen leaves
> Returning to their branches:
> Alas, butterflies were they.

Somebody else, perhaps Lafcadio Hearn, has made a better translation of the Eighteenth Century Lady Kaga no Chiyo's "On Her Dead Child" than Chamberlain's lines:

> Today, how far may he have wandered,
> The brave hunter of dragon-flies?

Certainly no one could improve on Hearn's Twelfth Century folk-song:

> All things change, we are told, in this world
> of change and sorrow;
> But love's way never changes of promising
> never to change.

After one has ploughed through Fenollosa's dull translation of Motokiyo's dull *Nō* play, *Nishikigi,* and wondered again why *Nō* plays are so solemnly impressive to Japanese intellectuals, one returns through this section of the anthology to Hearn, Waley, Chamberlain, Page and, above all of them perhaps except Hearn, to the less known collaborators, Shotaro Kimura and Charlotte M. A. Peake, who are best represented by "Reminiscence", from the priest Sosei:

> Passionate music of the nightingale,
> Not joy you bring me but a strange regret,
> A memory of nothingness, the pale
> Face of a lover I have never met.

The Chinese section has the advantage which Miss Tietjens points out, at least for readers during this generation, of having a greater number of contemporary translators than have been interested in the literature of the other countries represented. She notes the kinship between the "objectivity" in Chinese poetry and ours. She observes the influence of Confucius, "with his practical wisdom", over the poetry of the Chinese as over their lives—neglecting, it seems to me, the mystical influence of Lao-tse. She foresees a coloring of English poetry in the future by Chinese poetry, "just as our poetry of an older day was influenced by the poetry of Persia and Arabia". And in this case, when she presents to us some of the oldest classics, she is fortunate in a translator, Helen Waddell, who, through conventional rhymed English stanzas, makes the three-thousand-year-old folk-songs as fresh and alive as though they had been written yesterday. Note, for instance, these three stanzas out of four from "Baroness Muh of Heu Complains", written by an unknown pioneer feminist of the Sixth Century B. C.:

> I would have gone to my lord in his need,
> Have galloped there all the way,
> But this is a matter concerns the state,
> And I, being a woman, must stay. . . .
>
> I may walk in the garden and gather
> Lilies of mother-of-pearl.
> I had a plan would have saved the state.
> —But mine are the thoughts of a girl.
>
> The Elder Statesmen sit on the mats,
> And wrangle through half a day;

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A hundred plans they have drafted and dropped,
And mine was the only way.

James Legge suffers by exhibition of his prosaic versions of the Odes. Herbert A. Giles is represented by one of the very few translations in which he has not made Chinese poetry ridiculous. Louise Strong Hammond is shown setting down English syllables which convey the meaning of the original into our language and at the same time allow it to follow the musical song-pattern of the Chinese characters. Florence Ayscough and Amy Lowell are present, uprooting the Chinese characters into lopsided prominence as against the colloquial intention of their authors and yet gaining something valuable through a sense of quaintness and color. Edward Powys Mathers is let in for his lusciousness. Arthur Waley is eminent, as usual, in any showing of translations from the Chinese, for his homely and straightforward vigor. Shigeyoshi Obata follows him in the same spirit; and so, I hope, do Kiang Kang-hu and I. Gertrude Laughlin Joerissen surprises me, as a translator whom I had not heretofore discovered. I quote her admirable version of Li Po's "White Heron":

That great flake of snow which has just floated over the lake was a white heron.
Motionless, at the end of a sand bank, the white heron watches the winter.

So much Chinese poetry has been printed lately from various translators that it will be enough to quote further out of this section only Arthur Waley's "What Should a Man Want?" from Wang Chi (about 700 A.D.), as characteristic of the sane temper dominant among the Chinese poets:

"Tell me now, what should a man want
But to sit alone sipping his cup of wine?"
I should like to have visitors come to discuss philosophy
And not to have tax-collectors coming to collect taxes;
My three sons married into good families,
My five daughters provided with steady husbands;
Then I could jog through a happy five score years,
Craving no cloud-ascent, no resurrection.

Oddly, in view of Ezra Pound's latter-day pedantries, the outstanding translation in the Chinese section is his human version of Li Po's "Exile's Letter", too long, alas, to quote. It lets one say, however, as do translations by Waley and some of the others, that only in this section, the Chinese, do the great poets of the foreign country seem in English the great poets.

Certainly in the section concerning India, the key-note of whose poetry, says Miss Tietjens, "is its subjectivity", the great poets are hardly worth reading in English. Sir Edwin Arnold comes nearer than any other of the earlier translators to giving life to his material. Fortunately for India's position in the book, there is a modern translator, Arthur W. Ryder, whose work redeems Indian poetry from seeming verbose and vapid. The *Rig-Veda,* the *Artharva-Veda,* even the famous *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana,* seem, in the English they are shown in, tedious performances. Ryder, on the other hand, extracts from the *Panchatantra* (first collected about 200 B.C.) such well-phrased bits of wisdom as the following:

Scholarship is less than sense;
Therefore seek intelligence.

For lost and dead and past
The wise have no laments;
Between the wise and fools
Is just this difference.

Even a pearl, so smoothly hard and round,
Is fastened by a thread and safely bound,
After a way to pierce its heart is found.

Expert as Ryder is in these epigrams, he fails, as completely as translators have failed working at greatness in other Oriental languages,

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to bring alive the greatness of the poet Kalidasa (about 400 A.D.). Nor is any of Kalidasa's translators more successful. Kalidasa, with his *Sakuntala* and other dramas, lies dead in these pages, although "India has long held Kalidasa to be the greatest of her poets". Paul Elmer More vitalizes a lyric called "Warning", from King Bhartrihari of the Seventh Century:

> O wanderer heart! avoid that haunted grove,
> The body of thy love;
> Nor in her bosom stray, wild mountain fells
> Where Love, the robber, dwells.

A. Berriedale Keith translates from the same King a "Reflection":

> It is easy to satisfy one who is ignorant,
> Even easier to satisfy a connoisseur;
> But not the creator himself can please the man
> Who has just a morsel of knowledge.

Except for fragments like these, Indian poetry in English might as well never have been translated. The translators have left it remote from us. Or is it the essence which is remote? The more subjective the poetry of a country, the more remote from the understanding of other countries? I wonder if we do not come to a conclusion different from that, after having read with Miss Tietjens the classic literature in English translation from these five Oriental countries.

First, as to the translations, there is one phenomenon easily to be observed through this review and inevitably, I believe, through the book itself. If my own reactions are any criterion, the successful translations are for the most part epigrams. The translator can apparently make the distance of a short poem with a quick point and turn it into effective English. A long poem seems hard, beyond instance at any rate in this anthology, to carry into another language. The only exceptions are poems from the Chinese. And this brings us to a point which may, I think, clarify the whole problem of translation.

Even in the ancient Chinese poems, dealing with life and customs alien to us through both space and time, there is a universal and enduring humanness. Is Miss Tietjens right in calling Chinese poetry objective and Indian poetry subjective? I doubt it very much. I should even be inclined to reverse her terms. There is a primitive subjectivity in the Arabic poetry, a man's response to his horse, camel, wife, sweetheart, muscle, sword, or whatever. There is a sophisticatedly sentimental subjectivity in both the Persian and the Japanese poetry, sensual and cynical on the one hand, exquisite and wistfully stoic on the other. The Indian subjectivity seems to me to be strikingly objective, a constant projection of the personal spirit to outside persons or things. Chinese poetry, on the other hand, which Miss Tietjens calls objective, is a constant identification of outside persons and things with oneself. May she not have been misled by the fact that the Chinese poet never exaggerates, never lies to himself, almost never boasts or demands, never indulges in unrealities to save himself from truth, never assumes a stature for himself beyond the stature that rightfully relates him to his fellows and to the consoling and consuming earth? This is not objectivity, whatsoever the terms may be in which he considers himself and the world. This is the most accurate subjectivity to which poets have ever been sensitive. And it is this balanced and eternally just subjectivity which makes the reflections, the problems, the considerations and even the surroundings of the Chinese poet more real to us in this generation than all the boasts of the Arabs, all the shrugs of the Persians, all the sighs of the Japanese, and all the reasoned raptures of the Indians. This poised subjectivity, moreover, on the surface of an eternally beautiful earth, is what makes Chinese poetry an easier matter for the translator than the poetry of these other countries.

After all, in spite of my remark that this book is a matter of translators, I suspect that it is fundamentally a matter of poetry.

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FICTION

DODSWORTH *by Sinclair Lewis*
(HARCOURT, BRACE; $2.50)

I WONDER if one could not start a literary journal that should be contributed to solely by the unspoiled readers of books, since, from the standpoint of the novelist, it seems wholly inappropriate that he should criticize the work of his brothers who are, also, inevitably his rivals! However, since the critics are usually too lordly to bother their heads about anything so humble as the inside problems of mere novel-writing, it is difficult to see who is to do that rather necessary job. The most, therefore, that one ought to permit oneself is a friendly hail across space, using the press as it were as a sort of broadcasting apparatus. Then, one may give forth an exposition!

I shall, thus, permit myself to say that I like *Dodsworth* much better than *Elmer Gantry* and that I like Mr. Dodsworth much better than Mr. Babbitt as being the more convincing, the more human and, I daresay, more "felt" by his creator. With an immense admiration for *Babbitt* as a book, I always had behind me the dim feeling that Mr. Babbitt himself was a little of a Robot, moved here and there by his creator in an unimaginably real projection of Main Streets—the landscape, as it were, being in the major chord. Humanly speaking (I am not here attempting literary criticism), this is a relatively wrong way to look at a landscape. The fact is, if you go to look at a landscape or to observe a country you won't much do so, your impressions being too self-conscious; whereas, if you live and are your normal self and, above all, suffer in any given environment, that environment will eat itself into your mind and come back to you in moments of emotion and you will be part of that environment and you will know it. It is because Mr. Dodsworth suffers and endures in odd places all over the European and semi-European world that both he, as a person, and the settings in which he suffers, as settings, seem to me to be very real. Perhaps that is only saying that *Dodsworth* is a poem which *Babbitt* isn't.

Indeed, the title might just as well have been "Europa, an Epic". For Mr. Lewis presents to you practically all of Europe that counts in our civilization, including New York which isn't America. He also poetizes these places so admirably through the emotions of the sympathetic Mr. Dodsworth that when you have finished the book you, too, will have suffered and had your own emotions in the rue de la Paix—genuine emotions and not limited to the fact that in a shoe-shop they tried to charge you one hundred and fifteen francs for paste shoe-buckles instead of one hundred francs which is the price on the label. Indeed, I lately heard a lady say that Egypt was a rotten country because you could not get shredded wheat biscuits in Shepherd's Hotel, which was not true at that. I learn from another that Corsica is a bum island because the New York papers could not be had in an obscure mountain village, whereas it is a known fact that the birthplace of Napoleon might as well be sunk beneath the sea, but for American money.

That is the sociological value of *Dodsworth* and the benefit it may do to civilization. Indeed, I think it is safe to say that the superiority of Mr. Lewis as a sociological writer far in advance of others lies in the fact that he has a remarkable gift for rendering and the restraint which keeps him from pointing morals. Of course, his characters do indulge themselves in a great number of expository disquisitions but Mr. Lewis makes it suffi-

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ciently clear that he backs neither set of views when they do discourse. Thus, things remain very much as they were at the beginning and the final impression is one of a sort of solidarity of mankind from Altoona to the Adriatic and back.

That is a great achievement and I hope that *Dodsworth* will diffuse itself by the million on both sides of the Atlantic. It will do more to spread a knowledge of the world and its friendlinesses and freshness and attractions than a wilderness of Baedekers. Besides, it is a good novel, a good story. I found myself towards the end of the book really hoping that the hero might get his young woman—hoping against hope and turning to the last page to make sure. This is the real test—more particularly for a book that is going to do good: for it must be read for itself and the moral must sink in unperceived as do the morals that we draw from life itself. To that end, we must identify ourselves with the characters and live in the scenes.

I found myself, as I have said, hoping that Mr. Dodsworth might have his luck because, subconsciously, I regarded it as an omen that I might have mine; and that is to read a book as one read in the old good days before fifty or so winters and half a century or so of books had besieged these brows. That is the real, unconscious tribute and the real, true, friendly hail!

FORD MADOX FORD

THE PERSIANS ARE COMING *by Bruno Frank* (KNOPF; $2.50)

THE German title of this book is *Politische Novelle,* which gives a much clearer idea of the author's purpose than does the rather cryptic American title. Bruno Frank is one of the most gifted of that band of German writers and artists who have faith in Europe as a psychological entity. Specifically, they are concerned with combatting the war spirit which still hovers over France and Germany.

Whether or not one is able to swallow Herr Frank's particular brand of idealism, his book remains a beautiful expression of it. Almost miraculous is his avoidance of the argumentative political note; at the same time, no attempt is made to disguise the fact that the core of the novelette is a series of political discussions between two statesmen, the German Carmer and the French Dorval, the latter an idealized (highly idealized, some might say) portrait of a well known contemporary French politician. In a prose so perspicuous and delicate and sincere that one hardly questions the pertinency of what they are saying, these liberal diplomats analyze the disease of Europe and discuss the possible methods of cure. The trouble with Europe is, of course, America. The imaginations of Europeans have been enslaved and inflamed by the glamour of transatlantic wealth. The Americans are the new barbarians, the modern Persians who must be repulsed at the borders of civilization by some imminent battle of Salamis. The fatherlands of Voltaire and Goethe must be rescued from the millionaire and the negroid, hysteric culture that he brings with him, symbolized for the slightly melodramatic fancy of Herr Frank in the person of Josephine Baker.

Naturally, no attempt is made to examine the validity of the civilization which is to be saved. There are those who believe that Voltaire and Goethe are of no more value or interest to the present age than Heraclitus or Zoroaster or St. Augustine; but their protests are disregarded. For men like Bruno Frank, the standards of civilization (and they are, of course, the standards set by Beethoven and Montaigne, not those set by Rothschild or Bismarck) are set, fixed, eternal. Such men are, in a sense, admirably courageous, for they battle, with no reward in sight, for a completely unselfish ideal. But from another point of view they are the most arrant cowards. They are strong enough for a desperate loyalty but not strong enough for an even more desperate renunciation. They are

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afraid to admit that the culture of their childhood (for all these highminded quotations from *Faust* may be looked upon as infantile reversions) is dead, not because it has been violently killed but because, in the most natural and inevitable way, it has outlived itself. The accents of Bruno Frank's political philosophy sound, to some ears, as beautifully as do the horns of Elfland—and as faintly.

CLIFTON P. FADIMAN

IN THOSE DAYS *by Harvey Fergusson* (KNOPF; $2.50)

MR. FERGUSSON has dipped again into one of the richest of American backgrounds. His new novel is a vivid and steadily interesting piece of fiction about pioneer days in the West. The story concerns a swiftly changing period, running all the way from Indian fighting in the New Mexican country to our own day of automobiles. For the purposes of his method, the author has built his novel about a common man, an "average type". His principal character is in no sense unusual and, in the hands of a less skillful novelist, might have been dull and commonplace. But no man who lived through the days that were Robert Jayson's on this earth could be dull and commonplace; the mere impact of excitement from his surroundings is enough to give him keen interest. This statement is made without any desire to detract from Mr. Fergusson's excellent characterization.

In Those Days unwinds the tale of the "winning of the West" in simple, unadorned and unself-conscious prose, which never interferes in the slightest with the smooth flow of the narrative. The effectiveness of this simplicity is again evidence that writing must be good when it is shaped from within, a literary truism that needs to be restated as often as possible. In the directness of Mr. Fergusson's style one is reminded of Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop.* Everything in both books is as clear and lucid as a piece of plate glass and yet both novels have the quality of depth which so many writers seek with curious devices and so often miss wholly.

The refreshing feature of *In Those Days* is that its author sat down to his typewriter with a story to tell. He had himself felt the drama of a changing civilization which, within the span of a lifetime, moved on from the free and easy days of Spanish rule to the border times of hard drinking and gunfighting, then to the coming of culture and the desire for law and order. The vividness of the book is the result of its author's own emotion over his material; he makes the reader feel as if he were in the midst of all that is happening. Middle-aged Americans from sections far distant from New Mexico will find the book stirring memory, for the border spirit was rife in a large part of the country day before yesterday. There were wide open saloons, killings in plenty, brothels run by women with a recognized place in the community, in many more states than New Mexico; and the coming of the machine age left thousands as thoroughly bewildered as was Jayson when he heard the first thunderings of a horseless carriage and said to himself that the things were a fad and could never take the place of the horses that played so large a part in the life of his own day.

Mr. Fergusson's book has vitality. It is history of the kind that does not get into textbooks or, rather, did not get into textbooks in a past generation. Yet, at bottom, it is the only really valid history, the lives of everyday people, what they do and say and think against the shifting background of Time.

HERSCHEL BRICKELL

QUARTET *by Jean Rhys* (SIMON & SCHUSTER; $2.25)

THIS book, *Quartet,* is a draft of concentrated bitterness. It is easy to sum up the ingredients: an English girl in Paris, married to a Polish adventurer, who is imprisoned for theft and leaves her penniless, a stranger

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except for casual acquaintances in the foreign colony, to become the guest of an English couple, a man who desires her and can arouse her passion, and his wife, who keeps the girl in the home where she has her always under observation, always at a disadvantage, until she can finally crush her. The attitudes of the three are exposed with pitiless precision—the utter helplessness of the victim, the diabolic ingenuity of the wife, the social cowardice of the husband which makes a peculiarly disgusting setting for his lust. It is all terribly plausible. The background of Paris, in its cold hostility, with its tedious round of mechanical pleasures, throws the episode into harsh relief. The tense, literal narration, almost ironic in its monotone, is a further reenforcement. Manner is perfectly adapted to matter. We shall have to go far to find another novel so powerfully wrought out of weakness, futility, betrayal, lust, and fear.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

THE TRUE HEART *by Sylvia Townsend Warner* (VIKING; $2.50)

MISS WARNER holds to the romantic creed of Stevenson, Barrie, and Cabell, the belief that the true life is in the dream. She shows us characters who are externally commonplace, "who-do-not-live-by-bread-alone-but-by-some-cherished and fantastic pleasure". And she has an almost uncanny power of realizing the dream by the most disarmingly plausible means. The way in which the stuff of life lends itself to satisfy the desires of the mind gives a kind of eerie quality to very ordinary objects and experience. It is this quality which imparts a certain solemnity to Miss Warner's novels, and separates them from the mere childishness of *A Kiss for Cinderella.*

The True Heart is the story of Sukey Bond, orphan, who, graduated with highest honors from the asylum into domestic service, fixes her heart upon a boy on the farm, the son of gentlefolk. English fiction has dealt often with the problem of class barriers broken by passion. Miss Warner has introduced an original element into it by making Erik somewhat defective or deficient, but not enough so to diminish his faun-like charm. He is a strange, wild creature, whom Sukey, sensing his need of her, pursues amid difficulties which can be conceived, hoping "till hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates". *The True Heart* has not the fine casualness of *Lolly Willowes,* or the vivid irony of *Mr. Fortune's Maggot,* but it is a worthy member of the trilogy.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT

BLOODY GROUND *by Fiswoode Tarleton* (DIAL PRESS; $2.00)

BLOODY GROUND is a series of short stories, all laid in and around a small hill-town of the southern mountains. The same characters appear in different tales, and we see them in many different situations: in family feuds, at the polls, at religious revivals, at the circus, driving the Negroes out of town, teaching school, and gouging each other's eyes out. So the author has some justification in calling his book "a cycle" of the mountains. He also has good reason for his title of *Bloody Ground:* his characters live with one finger on the trigger of their rifles and a code that makes them, on occasion, more ashamed not to kill than to kill: each story culminates in violence or is overhung with the threat of it. Meeting these same characters from tale to tale, one finds the book taking shape as a whole; and the individual stories are compact and interesting. Yet, in spite of all this, one is left, after several hours of reading, with an empty feeling. The local dialects, the local traditions, the little details that give an impression of reality, are all there; but, in creating his characters, the author seems to have thought of them always as mountain men rather than as men, and of his writing as news about them for the outside world. A mountain man keeps his word; a mountain man hates his kin's enemies; a mountain

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man would let himself be hanged out of chivalry. On these generalized characterizations the stories are built, and they are exciting stories while they last. But the reader cannot help suspecting that, even in the mountains, one man differs from another and that traditions are not always followed. And it is on the threshold of such divergences—where these stories stop—that literature begins.

LAWRENCE S. MORRIS

EXPIATION *by Elizabeth* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN; $2.50)

As THE framework for her latest novel, Elizabeth has chosen an exquisitely comic situation, spiced with impropriety and salted with ironic surprise. Milly Bott, at forty-five, was one of those soft, cushiony, yielding little women who seem especially designed for the comfort of men. Her numerous brothers-in-law approved of her and compared her favorably with their own angular wives. Then the lightning struck. Milly's husband, in his will, left all but a thousand pounds to a home for fallen women. "My wife will know why," he wrote. The Botts were slow, but they were not dense. It was clear that Milly had sinned and it was equally clear that, for the honor of the family, she must be petted and cherished lest the world suspect. So Milly, after an abortive attempt at escape, was invited to expiate her one scarlet sin by visiting, in turn, each of the outraged Botts.

Here is admirable material for comedy, and Elizabeth has made the most of it. Because she is so finished a craftsman, her climaxes are never fumbled. Each scene is better than one anticipates, funnier, more delectable. There is never, however, any hint of burlesque. Her characters are so deftly drawn, in all their absurdity, that their microscopic quarrels and agonies have the veracity of life, even attaining dramatic importance. This is light fiction at its best and that best is not to be despised. Without mounting a pulpit, Elizabeth manages to insinuate that sin can have mellowing and humanizing effects which are preferable to dour respectability. *Expiation,* despite its surface froth, is a shrewd commentary on middle class manners and morals. It is also, incidentally, one of the best of Elizabeth's novels.

EDITH H. WALTON

MOTHER MARY *by Heinrich Mann* (SIMON & SCHUSTER; $2.50)

THE LAND OF COCKAIGNE *by Heinrich Mann* (MACAULAY; $2.50)

THE brothers Mann are—in the words of *Spoon River Anthology*—"wedded not through union but through separation". They are known for their differences—for views of politics and society which are widely disparate and have occasioned a public coolness lasting over many years. Frequently they must have been deeply tried by the persistence with which their names are linked in literary reviews. Thomas Mann was an idol of pre-war Germany and in *Buddenbrooks* achieved a work that will survive the tests of time and revolution. Heinrich Mann has come into his own more recently and at present seems to be in the ascendant over his more classically-minded relative. His *Mutter Maria* was a stupendous success in Germany, both for its modernism in style and for the modernity of its material.

As background, it takes the period of stabilization in Germany, when incredible fortunes were seized by a few and incredible ruin fell upon the rest. It is a time when anything might have happened, and did, when the most fantastic things were real. There is a family of fallen aristocrats, mortgaged in person and property to the shadiest sort of *Schieber*. A baroness enters: beautiful, fantastic, of vast riches and doubtful origin. Her desire is to save the family of Schellendorf and thus buy back her son, whom she had abandoned to them as an infant.

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There follows a series of complex and subtle conflicts, in which each character in the story is, in turn, involved. Delicate, warring reactions tremble beneath the surface of conversation and result in the ultimate defeat of the mother. Outside influences enter, characteristic of the epoch—rumors of financial scandal, of revolutionary intrigue; the dancing fever that swept post-war Europe; even the current reaction towards Catholicism. Every one of these does duty as a symbol, just as the names of the characters are symbolic and the title of the book itself. A ruby assumes the significance of the Sacred Heart, and the passion of Mother Mary for her son, at times unnatural in its intensity, is converted into a kind of holy and universal renunciation. Unfortunately, *Mother Mary* is a book that has suffered greatly in translation. It would be hard to convince anyone reading those unhappy, stilted pages that the original is one of the masterpieces of our time. Through the mists of bad English, the essential melodrama appears, stripped of its shading—stripped, above all, of that exquisite lyric style, that perfection of phrase and cadence which makes the original as moving as fine music beautifully played.

The Land of Cockaigne is a much earlier work, written in a lighter mood. With the good-natured cynicism of a Petronius—and with something of his license—it pictures the feasts and pastimes of a wealthy bourgeois circle in the 'nineties. The extravagance of that world which money has created recalls the freedman society of imperial Rome where Trimalchio entertained his friends. All the elements of a *Satyricon* are here, excepting the element of homosexuality. The luxury, the waste, the horse-play, the casual morals, the horde of hangers-on—they are all thrown together in one bewildering farce.

Unlike as these novels are, they have several things in common. Both of them move at a feverish speed, with many short cuts in narration, and both of them imply a conception of "bourgeois society" which would draw cheers from the lips of an orthodox Marxian. Herr Seehase, whose name in translation means "bloater", Herr Turkheimer, whose heraldic mark is a Turk swinging his sword, would correspond to any communist's picture of a big, bad banker. Ruthless in accumulation, they sacrifice individuals and masses to their schemes. They corrupt the press, they defile their dependents. Flabby and gross, gnawed by lusts of the flesh, they succumb only to the ills that flesh is heir to. When these super-capitalists are finally broken by sickness, "what a solemn sunset it turns out to be"! I do not believe it is accidental, in *Mother Mary,* that the friend of Valentine's boyhood, the one really strong and high-minded figure in the book, happens to be a communist.

It may be that I am imputing to Herr Mann doctrines that he would not care to accept; but his art is certainly fired to some degree by radical, social thinking. One can understand why this art does not attract his brother Thomas, whose scenes of middle-class society are tinged with melancholy and a kindly humor and whose attitude is rather that of a philosopher viewing life from a magic-mountain of detachment.

ROSE LEE

THE INSIDER *by Alice Beal Parsons*
(DUTTON; $2.50)

THERE was a definite purpose in Mrs. Parsons's book, almost a thesis, and yet she has worked it out in so peculiar a manner—a manner that seems like a thin adumbration of Henry James—that the reader sees it obliquely. Two contrasted lives form the rather tightly conceived theme of *The Insider,* one a man, well-born, intelligent, and ambitious, and the other a woman, the child of outcasts. These people have a disastrous love-affair in early youth and then part. Through the eyes of a third person the reader perceives what each character does with life. Moira Robertson, the woman in the case,

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achieves a success because she is outside the mass-life of her time, unattached to it by the thousand and one almost invisible chains that make a personality an integral part of the community. Alf Purdy, on the other hand, unquestionably an "insider" animated with great hopes and ambitions, is frustrated in his long search for complete self-realization and triumph.

Mrs. Parsons's thesis seems to be that the curious off-shoots of American life have a better chance at individualistic self-realization than those unfortunate personalities who are actually a part of the national consciousness. But the thesis is not clearly developed. There are too many things indicated by inference, too much slyness in the book, too eager a desire to escape obviousness at all costs. Alf Purdy is felt as an authentic personality, but Moira Robertson becomes merely a point, an attitude, to which the author may discreetly turn the attentions of her readers now and then.

This is not enough for the purpose of the book. Neither is the technique of the third person building up the tale satisfactory. Only Henry James could handle that method with a slow and deliberate dexterity. Yet there is much in *The Insider* that is pertinent, much that is intelligently conceived, and several scenes that display acute and distinguished writing. The book as a whole, however, does not exhaust its subject enough and the reader has the uneasy feeling that not all of the tale has been told when the last page is reached.

HERBERT GORMAN

ROME HAUL *by Walter D. Edmonds* (LITTLE, BROWN; $2.50)

MR. EDMONDS has accomplished far more in *Rome Haul* than the concoction of an agreeable story; he has recreated a miniature world as well, a world with all its unique characters, peculiar circumstances, and individual language.

The old life along the Erie Canal in the 'fifties with its freight-piled boats, its tow-ropes, its ambling horses and mules, its cursing drivers and boatmen, its lock-keepers, its bullies, its itinerant peddlers and preachers and its matter-of-fact women was unique and concentrated, an existence as distinct from the other phenomena of American life as the Mississippi of side-wheeler days or the great era of the Nantucket whalers. Mr. Edmonds, who appears to have ransacked the transient documentation of Erie Canal days and to have secured many anecdotes, reminiscences and hints from old boatmen, has fashioned all this material into a loose ambling narrative as leisurely as the flow of the old ditch. With surprising skill he has recreated the atmosphere of the time until the reader fairly smells the stagnant water, the frying pork-chops and greasy potatoes, the tobacco-stained garments of the characters and the hot rum-and-lemon toddies. It is a triumph of atmospheric reality.

Two threads of narrative stitch this crazy-quilt of colors together. One of them is the chase of Gentleman Joe Calash, the picturesque, swashbuckling rascal, who rides all through the book on his horse followed closely by the Department of Justice official, Henderson. The other is the love-story of Dan Harrow and Mollie Larkin. Dan starts with nothing as a driver on the canal and, through unexpected luck, becomes the owner of a boat. Mollie, one of those curious amoral women who acted as cooks and in more intimate capacities on the canal-boats, is the most satisfying creation in *Rome Haul*. A host of lesser characters, boatmen, horse-dealers, saloon-keepers and traders, move with a satisfying air of life in the background. It is all loosely woven but entirely convincing from beginning to end, one of those books that the reader finishes with the realization that he has been living with characters so vividly conceived as to seem real.

HERBERT GORMAN

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THE BURNING FOUNTAIN *by Eleanor Carroll Chilton* (JOHN DAY; $2.50)

ELEANOR CARROLL CHILTON has genuine talents for writing novels. She is mistress of a clean prose, she can write sparkling dialogue and when she wishes she can manage dramatic situations. Furthermore, she is ambitious to realize the highly serious aims of art, and that is refreshing in an age of reportorial fiction. In *The Burning Fountain* she attempts to divine, by means of characters that verge on becoming symbolic, what the sense and object of human existence is.

A terrific storm breaks soon after the novel opens, and synchronized with the lightning and thunder is the conception of Lynneth near "The Tree" on the estate of Donald and Janet Kenwyn. She is born amidst foreboding circumstances in another storm on the Cornish coast, and thereafter the Kenwyns find her a most baffling and awesome daughter. Time passes, but not the mystery of Lynneth who appears to be a kind of incarnation of Innocence, self-contained, a wanderer in the out-of-doors, oblivious to social ways of thinking. Another terrific storm closes the book. Lynneth has run out in it to "The Tree" and is killed when lightning strikes it.

A superficial description of the "plot", but a need for brevity obliges it. For the true plot of *The Burning Fountain* is an interior affair, consisting as it does of very little that the characters do and say and very much of their introspections. This unfortunately is a little wearisome. We would rather deduce their fine thoughts and feelings from a vivid presentation of their behavior than take their actuality for granted while mazing around in their gossamer webs of speculation. It is, for instance, Falstaff in action that gives us Falstaff's psychology, and the same is ultimately true of Hamlet. Both are *embodied* attitudes toward life, but Miss Chilton puts the emphasis on elaborate charts of mental processes. Her most important character, Lynneth, is, however, blank even there. So static and unstriving is she, that she even seems subhuman and animal-like, rather than some spiritual essence. "It was simply impossible," thinks one of the characters and the reader agrees, "to try to imagine anything in Lynneth that could be changed, or developed."

In short, the author's psychological analysis spoils the parabolic significances she apparently aspires to attain. Although she could do a fine novel of manners, one hopes that she will not relinquish her present direction but recur to it when she has discovered some of the simplicities of human nature—which are the stuff of symbols and the basis of all complex variations in character.

GORHAM B. MUNSON

INTERLUDE *by Frank Thiess* (KNOPF; $2.50)

FRANK THIESS is a gifted and sure interpreter of those intimate crises, those secret ecstasies, those mysterious imperatives of the human spirit which our audacious contemporaries, emboldened by the discoveries of the new psychology and the consequent necessity of extending the limits of artistic enterprise, are investigating with such rich and astounding results. In *The Gateway to Life* and *The Devil's Shadow,* the public has already had proof that Frank Thiess has relinquished in his art none of the substantial excellences of traditional Realism, that he is a rarely accomplished craftsman, an inquisitor of almost clairvoyant sensitiveness and a creative artist of the first order. In *Interlude,* we have still further proof of his superb qualities. It is a slight story, briefly told—in a moment of overwhelming passion, a man elopes with the wife of his friend; they live in their love with a completeness neither had ever known before, yet presently the wife feels that a higher obligation calls her back to her husband and the lover lets her go, in perfect understanding. The story is narrated with a simple, direct candor which eludes no particular of their passion, yet with a heartbreaking

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poignancy and an apprehension of the remotest impulses, renunciations and compensations of physical and spiritual love which raise this little novel to impressive stature.

WILLIAM A. DRAKE

VICTORY *by Ricarda Huch* (KNOPF; $2.50)

IN *Defeat,* the earlier volume of Ricarda Huch's romance of the Italian *Risorgimento,* we beheld the moving spectacle of a great patriot, magnificently at bay amid the apparent ruin of his dreams. *Defeat* was concerned with the years 1848-9 in this imaginative re-creation of the career of the Italian Liberator—the difficult period of the Roman campaign, when there seemed no hope remaining for his cause. *Victory* takes up the narrative at the astounding triumph of Garibaldi's arms at Solferino and leaves it at Aspromonte, when those glorious arms were humbled and tarnished with fraternal blood. At this crisis, loving her protagonist, Ricarda Huch has deemed it fitting to end her narration of the life of Giuseppe Garibaldi.

There is something very close to the essence of the popular Italian character in that of Giuseppe Garibaldi, and Ricarda Huch, with her extraordinary talent for divination and representation, has portrayed it with rare cunning. Garibaldi was Italy—that is why his memory is venerated there like that of a popular saint. A scrutiny of his campaigns reveals him, in the fundamentals of tactics and strategy, as one of the most incompetent generals of history. A study of his interminable disputes with Mazzini and Cavour shows him to have been still less a statesman. Yet, he bore within him, in the days of his glory, a sublime genius—the infatuation with the ideal. He was a born leader of men and, by the grace of historical necessity in his particular epoch, it was his part to lead his countrymen to freedom. It is small wonder that Garibaldi's extraordinary character should have so engaged Dumas that the chronicler of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* projected a history of his deeds. He is more operatic than Ernani, more Italian than Orlando. Full of impetuous courage, headstrong faith in the rightness of his cause and haughty confidence in his divine appointment to succor it, he boldly set himself against incredible odds and braved the impossible. If, thereafter, his obstinacy carried him too far and his epic qualities suffered diminishment, that, too, is part of the man. For Garibaldi was not more godlike than Achilles.

Ricarda Huch's narrative of Garibaldi's career remains, in most of its details, so faithful to historical fact that the book can hardly be termed fiction. Yet, it is so essentially romantic in manner and treatment that it would be still more difficult to term it biography. Between these, it occupies with complete success a well proportioned and elegant mean. So much of both the mellow assurance of Ricarda Huch's creative talent and her erudite, conscious mastery of her materials—which have produced, on the one hand, her romances and, on the other, her biographies—have gone into the making of these volumes that one can hardly ask more of such an artist than that her life may be long and her books many.

WILLIAM A. DRAKE

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BIOGRAPHY

THE DIARY OF DOSTOYEVSKY'S WIFE (MACMILLAN; $7.00)

It is to be hoped, for the eternal peace of Anna Grigorievna Dostoyevsky, that no astigmatic biographer will use her diary to depict her husband. She was the great man's second wife, twenty years his junior, and her journal covers the first four months of the exile that was to last for four years. He had to leave Russia shortly after their marriage to escape his creditors, and the pair wandered from town to town in Germany. Fyodor could never stay long in one place!

The diary is cluttered with detail about the prices of lodgings, meals, laundry, the books at the lending library and the Dostoyevskys' largesse when in funds—to one beggar for "his truly magnificent nose". Anna says she started it to keep up her shorthand, but you know it was her comfort in her loneliness. What an appallingly lonely girl she must have been! She was pregnant, far from her people, her husband pawned her clothes to pay his gambling debts, he had epileptic fits and refused to see a doctor and he corresponded constantly with Suslova, the probable prototype of his intriguing and "infernal" heroines. But Anna loved Fyodor. He was her darling and incidentally, quite incidentally, a genius. She might "for very rage start to tremble all over" at his tempers, but then she had a temper, too, and he loved her.

Naturally, the value of the diary is the insight it gives into Dostoyevsky's character. It confirms the worst that was ever said of him. The righteous and those who look to marriage for a meal-ticket or a legalized grand passion will certainly be very sorry for his wife. Yet what an enviable couple they were! They were chums and shared a sense of humor and a knowledge of each other's fundamental likes and dislikes. Fyodor might pawn their wedding rings and spend agonizing hours at the gaming table. Anna would understand—unless there was a thunderstorm. Then he hurried home in a downpour of rain, for she might be terrified. He might lose her a night's rest by kissing her awake from a first sound sleep, as he always did, so that they might talk. But, if he threatened never to do it again, she cried herself sick. These talks were the most precious part of their day. She records not one word of them. She is speaking of her husband, not the world's genius. She frankly adored him and one must believe her when she says that he loved her ten times more after marriage than before, because now he "realizes how genuine and straightforward I am".

There is no yardstick by which to measure a happy marriage. Perhaps the wives who keep off callers and "cultivate the right people" are the right wives for contemporary writers. Elsewhere—but not in this diary except by inference—do we learn what Anna did for Dostoyevsky. The world owes much to the "little grig" who could scratch like a kitten when aroused but who found it "impossible to be really cross with Fyodor, added to which I don't want to be". He was perhaps the "old, slovenly, toothless sinner" he calls himself and perhaps she "had not yet come to a full knowledge of life", when she married him. She came to it quickly and stuck to him. Anna Grigorievna had her husband's intuitive knowledge of what is worth while in life and what constitutes real marriage. We learn much of him by his choice of her as a companion.

NORAH MEADE

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LETTERS AND LEADERS OF MY DAY
by T. M. Healy (STOKES; $10.00)

MAINLY in the form of letters to his brother and his wife, Tim Healy tells here the story of his part in Irish political life over a period of sixty years. The story ends with his appointment as Governor-General of the Irish Free State. Unknown to the writer, the letters were preserved by the recipients, and he strings a selection of them on a slight thread of narrative into connected history. Incidentally he quotes contemporary comment on himself; and that by P. W. Wilson in the London *Daily News* of July, 1911, perhaps sums him up as well as possible. "Whence comes this Tim, half-tiger, half-wasp, with the cruelty and kindness of a woman, the dexterity of an advocate, the phrase-making of a poet?"

Healy is both tiger and wasp in dealing with the men of his own time, Parnell, Davitt and Dillon. Only to the makers of the Free State, men young enough to be his sons, does he show any kindness. When Irish history comes to be written, the part played by Healy in the making of the new Irish nation may well be found to be of less significance than his share in an earlier period —that of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the rise and fall of Parnell. The letters selected here afford evidence for his future defense.

When asked for an appreciation of Parnell's character, he wrote: "I find no intrinsic pleasure in the functions of an iconoclast", and then proceeded to smash the idol in an eloquently vituperative letter. But, whether he likes it or not, Tim Healy was an iconoclast, one of those Celts of whom Mommsen says that they helped to overthrow every empire but built none of their own. Healy could never build; he could only break. That he backed the builders of the Irish Free State is a tribute to his intelligence and the mellowness that came with his old age. Good wine mellows, and bad grows sour. I must confess that, despite the contemptuous anger a convinced Parnellite must feel for Healy, he leaves at the end a good taste in the mouth.

NORAH MEADE

THE DIARY OF TOLSTOY'S WIFE
(PAYSON & CLARKE; $3.50)

THE Countess Tolstoy's marital problems, as revealed in her diary, have little in common with those of the secretary who became Dostoyevsky's wife. The problems of the Countess were due in part to the possession of wealth, not to poverty, and in part to the fact that her husband had little interest in her petty comforts or even her important convictions. It would be easy, however, to deduce too much about her unhappiness from this diary. It was kept only intermittently over a period of thirty-one years, and Tolstoy was probably right when he said that she had recourse to it only "in a bad mood".

Its importance lies in the fact that she was the field on which he fought the battle between his Christian principles and social position. No wonder she screamed aloud. A less neurotic woman might have done so even oftener, and she is perhaps correct when she claims: "What saved our marriage was my childlike innocence and my instinct for self-preservation".

Even before their marriage he compelled her to read the diaries of his early life—a kind of mental sadism on his part. Thirty years later she had not recovered from the shock, for in 1890, apropos of them, she writes:

> I doubt that the sharp sting of jealousy and my bewilderment at the thought of such filth and debauchery have ever quite disappeared. May God preserve all young souls from such wounds—for they will never heal.

On top of incessant child-bearing she had to endure his "state of moral jumpiness". He filled her home with the "dark ones" who

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sneered at her inability to sympathize with his new-found Christian principles but who, thanks to her assumption of his financial responsibilities, were able to live comfortably on her hospitality. The unpleasant, thankless obligations of a life in which innumerable peasants looked to him for guidance and discipline were left to her—exclusively to her when their performance conflicted with his humanitarian convictions. He allowed her to prosecute the peasants who stole their timber and blamed her when the legal charge he had failed to investigate proved to be criminal and the peasants, therefore, were forced to go to jail.

"It would be much easier," she confides to her diary, "to say: I am a Christian and shan't do anything, for it goes against my rules."

But her real torture, if one may believe the diary, was her doubt as to the quality of Tolstoy's love. In one of the diaries she copies she finds him saying: "There is no love, there is only physical craving for intercourse and the rational need of a life companion".

She is envious of "such people as the Nagornyis; for, after all, they are *together*—there is some other link between them besides the mere physical one. . . . As for us, good God, it is sufficient to hear his cold, irritable, insincere tone, when he is talking to me". And, to crown it all, he objects to her copying out the old diaries, because he would like to "appear before his children and the public only in his patriarchal robes. His vanity is immense!"

The Countess Tolstoy was a busy woman—estate manager, prosecutor, secretary, mother of a large family, hostess to hordes of guests. Just how unhappy her marriage really was, it is impossible to say. There are gaps of almost a year between the entries, when presumably she was not in need of the consolation of the "silent companion", whose intimate revelations are now given to the world.

NORAH MEADE

THE BROWNINGS *by Osbert Burdett* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN; $4.00)

THE BROWNINGS: A VICTORIAN IDYLL *by David Loth* (BRENTANO'S; $3.75)

SOME MEMORIES OF ROBERT BROWNING *by his daughter-in-law, Fannie Barrett Browning* (MARSHALL JONES; $2.50)

ALTHOUGH our fiction and biography have dealt exhaustively of late with promiscuity in all its many varieties, however politely veiled, there can be no doubt, as Mr. Aldous Huxley has recently suggested, that the marriage of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning represents a "higher evolution". But it has been generally assumed that this famous "affair" was conducted with all the mincing, Victorian, slightly ridiculous circumspection of a best-selling novel of the time. And it would be easy to tell the story with a superior Twentieth Century air, dwelling on the superficial proprieties and taboos which certainly did surround the Brownings and which were as much a part of their environment as the sofas and antimacassars.

Mr. Burdett and Mr. Loth have chosen, however, to tell it without superior irony. In fact, nothing is more striking in both books than the enthusiasm of the authors for their hero and heroine. Here is a union of which we know more than of any other in our literature. The records are so complete that we can trace almost day by day the beginning and progress and completion of a mutual attraction. For, in spite of Browning's reiterated declaration that the private life of an artist is nobody's business, both he and Elizabeth Barrett unlocked their hearts in poems and letters with a fullness unparalleled—not for publication, of course. But all has been published, in a multitude of books which few people have the time or incentive to read. It was high time that some one should make a connected narrative out of such scattered materials, and this has now

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been done with a frankness and completeness such as the earlier biographers could not compass.

Mr. Loth has adopted a style more animated (it is even jaunty) than Mr. Burdett and has dwelt rather on the picturesque and humorous suggestions of his narrative; but his book is clearly written out of full knowledge and a genuine affection. He has almost entirely omitted literary criticism, though he has never forgotten that he was writing about authors. Mr. Burdett, in a quieter vein, has not only told the same story with even greater detail—being particularly successful in his picture of the Barrett home, that strange Ibsen household, as he aptly calls it—but has examined the work of each poet in turn. I found very little to take exception to in his appraisals or conclusions, though I should like to argue with him his opinion that Browning is essentially a religious poet. To me he seems rather a psychologist who happened to be particularly interested in the "varieties of religious experience", removed as far as possible from mysticism or even the simple devotion of his wife.

The main accomplishment of both books should prove to be this: to make known to the world that Elizabeth Barrett was a remarkable writer of prose and that Robert Browning was not a philosopher or a maker of metaphysical and syntactical puzzles, but a great poet. We do not yet fully realize that Browning was a revolutionary whose influence upon present-day poetry and, perhaps still more, upon recent fiction, was profound; and these excellent books may well arouse a renewed interest in his work as well as his life. That Mrs. Browning was a great letter-writer, a remarkable critic and an exceedingly intelligent woman, they have certainly demonstrated.

The little book, *Some Memories of Robert Browning,* is an interesting reminiscence of his later years, chiefly valuable as the unliterary impressions of a young American girl who knew him as a father rather than as a celebrity. The account of his last days and of his funeral supplements what was already known, and the notes on some of his friends are instructive and amusing. I found particularly welcome the memories concerning Mrs. Orr, to whom students of Browning owe a great debt.

ROBERT M. GAY

WELLINGTON *by Oliver Brett*
(DOUBLEDAY, DORAN; $3.50)

THE Duke of Wellington was a snob. His attitude towards the rank and file of his devoted army was one of interested contempt; the victor of Waterloo hated war so deeply that in after life its avoidance was the *stella polaris* of his political career. He despised anything that savored of democracy and put through the emancipation of the Catholics and was prepared—had he been able to form a Cabinet—to put through the First Reform Bill. He was a Tory "die-hard" and devoted his career in the House of Lords to helping the Whigs remain in power. He was fond—over-fond—of pretty women and could write to a blackmailing ladylove his famous "Dear Fanny: Publish and be damned!"

In a word, the Iron Duke was a mixture of very human qualities and amazing inconsistencies. Mr. Brett does not aspire to write his biography nor to analyze his military career. Instead, he has attempted to produce what Gamaliel Bradford would call a "psychograph". "Beneath the actions of his military and public life," he writes, "beneath the blinding glamour of his surpassing fame, there is the task of finding the essential portrait of the man himself."

It is no easy task to resolve a cast-iron Victorian urn into the elements and forces which produced it. To begin with young Wellington was "the fool of the family". His brother, later the Viceroy of India, once remarked, "there goes my brother Arthur, the biggest ass in Europe". "At Eton he was idle at work and at games." His education was

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inadequate. He owed his preferment in the Indian Army to his brother's favoritism and the purchase of commissions. He owed his assignment to the Spanish "side-show" of the Napoleonic Wars to expert wire-pulling. He did not get on with his officers and had a low opinion of his troops. He despised the Spaniards and the Portuguese. His military talent consisted in the humble art of preparation. He kept his army paid and supplied. He never lost a piece of artillery in his career. His construction of the lines of Torres Vedras was a master-stroke of sensible foresight that thwarted an entire French plan of campaign. Masséna remarked, when he saw these famous earthworks, *"Que diable! il n'a pas construit ces montagnes?"*. Wellington made mountains out of mole-hills with the facility of an expert tactician, a propensity which served him well in his later political life.

Mr. Brett sums it up in these words: "Integrity, resolution, a cool head, a capacity for an enormous amount of hard, dry, detailed work, energy and reserve were combined with insight into the character of others, and a wise moderation in Imperial affairs". Nothing, however, could surpass the portrait which has been painted of Wellington by Napoleon and himself. When Bonaparte was told of Wellington's victory at Talavera, he made this comment: *"Il paraît que c'est un homme, ce Wellesley"*. After the victory of Waterloo, Wellington returned the compliment. " 'The fellow wasn't a gentleman', was his comment at the end of the great war."

The plain fact is that Wellington was both a snob and a great man, at one and the same time. That this combination is by no means self-contradictory is one of the lessons of English history.

JOHN CARTER

BAUDELAIRE: FLOWER OF EVIL *by François Porché* (LIVERIGHT; $3.50)

WHEN Baudelaire's popularity in Europe is due to the present-day revolt against materialism, to present him in America as a "Flower of Evil" would seem, even from a commercial standpoint, to prove our *naïveté*. Yet this is the subtitle on the lurid jacket of François Porché's *Baudelaire*, a novelized life by a minor French poet, which came out three years ago in France and was translated and printed last year in England.

The translation, which is the work of Mr. John Mavin, decidedly improves the sentimental original, full of apostrophes to the reader or the characters (*Et vous, Caroline, vous pleurez*); but there are many errors in the printing of the proper names.

M. Porché imagines few things which might not have happened, although he rarely indicates his additions, thereby giving the student a sense of insecurity. Even the story of the albatross which ends in the stewing-kettle of the ship's galley is possible, considering the poem. But the incident of the poet's cat, which according to his own letter was "sent away" by his mistress and which in this book she "poisoned", is indefensible except on the grounds of such poetic license as may be extended to a poet-biographer; it illustrates the sympathetic mood of the book which has given it several editions in France.

Being a Catholic, as he informs us, M. Porché forgets to develop the religious background of Baudelaire's childhood, so vital in his inner conflict. He contributes from his own experience valuable details about the school-discipline which warped his hero; but although he twice asserts that no poet's life can be treated without his works, he merely mentions, without discussing, most of the critical articles, totalling nearly a thousand pages, which define so clearly the poet's ineradicable idealism. To paint a convincing portrait of Baudelaire one must know and weigh every line written by that complicated personality, whose intellect, always quick to rise from the sensation to the idea, saved him from being a "Flower of Evil".

LEWIS PIAGET SHANKS

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WILLIAM COWPER *by Hugh I'Anson Fausset* (HARCOURT, BRACE; $4.00)

THE life of this minor poet, whose nature was gentle and affectionate, contained a spring of humor, apparent in his letters, which is still fresh and natural to-day. His mind and nerves, however, were so fatally flawed that he made several ineffectual efforts to kill himself. He was also subject to a gruesome religious delusion, suffered from periods of insanity and ended his days in its final darkness. Such a life is not altogether congenial to biography. It contains almost no activities and episodes of a worldly kind, it does not offer a web of interesting literary relationships, nor does it present poetic achievements of much concern to posterity. Cowper's very tragedy is not one which any large portion of mankind can turn aside to pity. He was not a man who struggled aggressively against fortune; he was not a robust spirit overthrown by a powerful stroke of fate. At his best, he gave a pathetic example of what Mr. Fausset calls passive courage and virtue, living patiently, modestly, kindly, not without some firmness or will to seize opportunity at times and with a great need to receive and express affection.

Of this life, Mr. Fausset makes a book chiefly notable for its delicate and sensitive writing and its sincere effort to understand and present sympathetically a spirit that asks so little of its fellows. Mr. Fausset devotes himself chiefly to Cowper's inner life, to the influences that shaped and preyed upon his mind. This method removes Cowper even farther from life and makes the portrait seem at times the abstract projection and history of a spirit rather than the picture of a man living in a physical world. A more external method would have produced a very different book, with much more definite information about Cowper and his associations. Mr. Fausset begins very early his analysis of Cowper's situation: for a mind predisposed to melancholy and self-distrust, the violent evangelical religious influences to which Cowper fell a victim were exactly the worst possible thing. Most readers will at once agree with this analysis. But it is repeated with variations throughout the book, until it becomes needlessly familiar. A magazine article would have sufficed for the treatment of Cowper's mental history, while his circumstantial life and the lives of the characters about him might have been treated with much greater fullness. Moreover, the formula which explains Cowper's injury by unwise evangelism does not seem adequate to explain the whole man. The humor and detached observation present in the letters quoted by Mr. Fausset seem to belong to a different creature from the religious victim pictured elsewhere. Perhaps the expression most indicative of the sort of fanatic it was Cowper's fate to encounter is found in a sentence describing the effect upon the Reverend John Newton of a report that Cowper had begun to enjoy some innocuous social pleasures. Newton, writes Mr. Fausset, "for ten years had received assurance of his unhappiness with sympathetic equanimity; but a mere rumour of his enjoyment provoked an immediate remonstrance".

Mr. Fausset's description of the pathetic close of Cowper's days, when Mrs. Unwin, on whom he had so long relied for tenderness and spiritual support, was brought low by paralytic strokes and when the final darkness was closing down on Cowper himself, is sincere and moving, a fitting close to a book written with much feeling.

THEODORE MORRISON

GEORGE W. CABLE: HIS LIFE AND LETTERS *by Lucy Leffingwell Cable Bikle* (SCRIBNER'S; $3.50)

THE name of George W. Cable, any proper book of reference will tell us, is one of the brightest associated with the so-called local colorists and stands first in point of time in the roll of writers of the New South. Yet this biography, loyally and competently prepared

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by one of Mr. Cable's daughters, makes no attempt to measure the performance of its subject; does not, as far as I recall, so much as mention local color and neglects to establish any connection between the author of *Old Creole Days* and a contemporary vogue for exploiting the geography and social peculiarities of one's native section. If we were to rely solely upon its information, we should think of Cable as a man of letters with but a slight obligation to Edward King and with no official place in the procession of Bret Harte's disciples. Nor should we have any but a vague idea of Cable's theories about literature; we are even obliged to infer that the decline in quality of his later writings was owing to a preoccupation with sociological problems.

The student of social history will have less cause for dissatisfaction with this volume, for Mrs. Bikle does waft to us some of the perfume of sentiment and manner that belonged to the period of Richard W. Gilder, of C. D. Warner, Aldrich and Allen, of Eggleston, Robert Grant and E. E. Hale, of Frank R. Stockton and W. D. Howells. Events made to revolve about Mr. Cable are testimony for a generation whose courtliness and refinement, whose prejudices in forms and customs provoke a feeling which lies between amusement and irritation and which is considerably relieved by the appearance of Mark Twain, who craves more room in which to swear and who patiently tolerates Sabbatarians and friends who fear the theatre.

What Mrs. Bikle has done best, however, is to make her book a biography in the purest and plainest sense, inasmuch as it is the straightforward record of a man's years, his deeds and his letters. She has proceeded evenly to compile a chronicle made up of correspondence and of her own statements that bridge gaps between the letters; she has set the stage and trained the lights so as to reveal character and personality. The Cable who bows from these pages is a singularly likable gentleman: naïve, alert with Gallic vivacity, hopeful of the improvement of his fellows, awake to the joy of living up to the hilt. Not the least admirable thing is the energy he could generate from a small and not too-robust body. The pulse of his character is shown as strong emotion, the emotion that inspired him to write, that made him the favorite of a public still under the magic of Dickens's laughter and tears, that won for him a wide friendship among the best of his time and that leaves him today a pleasant memory and the author of an American classic.

GRANT C. KNIGHT

MOUSSORGSKY *by Oskar von Riesemann* (KNOPF; $5.00)

HERR VON RIESEMANN'S *Moussorgsky* is most excellent in its learning, its sympathy and its taste. Moussorgsky's career was cut of two patterns, imposed one against the other: the one, a gradual fall in his material life and circumstances; and the other, a steady, inspired rise in his artistic being.

He was one of the most versatile of artists: as a pianist, he could have rivalled Rubinstein; he was a gifted singer; he could act with fine taste; he wrote beautifully; at first, he was an army officer; and he remains, of course, the superlative musical genius of Russia.

Of that fascinating group of musicians—the "Powerful Coterie" of five: Balakirev, Cui, Rimski-Korsakov, Borodin and Moussorgsky—Herr von Riesemann has made a good study. It is interesting that all these five men were, in effect, musical amateurs, for several were in military service, others were professionals in unmusical fields. (Though Rimski-Korsakov, of course, became professor later.) It was these men—particularly Balakirev—and Stassov, the leading influence for art in his day, who most helped to mould the arresting genius of their colleague. Their subsequent desertion of him and the abjec-

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tion that impaired and destroyed his incomparable gifts are cause for bitter reflection.

Mr. England's translation is admirable. The last chapter deals with "The Subsequent History of the Works", which are chronologically listed in an appendix. There are, also, a bibliography and a full index.

PAUL HORGAN

PRESIDENTS I'VE KNOWN AND TWO NEAR PRESIDENTS *by Charles Willis Thompson* (BOBBS-MERRILL; $3.00)

THESE are the rapidly written recollections of an old reporter, refreshing and full of interest when confined to contacts and quotations but overburdened with "editorializing", as the copy readers would say had his "stuff" come under their hands. The Presidents considered are William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. The "near Presidents" are Marcus A. Hanna and William Jennings Bryan. As correspondent of the New York *World* and the New York *Times,* Mr. Thompson "covered" all of these gentlemen. Critically, he is poorest in describing McKinley, Hanna and Bryan; Taft eludes him a bit, though the most honest of the lot. He is curtly summed up as a "blunderer". Roosevelt consumes the largest share of the space, having hypnotized this particular reporter, as he did many others, with his hearty familiarity and pretenses of confidence which muffled them as correspondents and transformed them into worshippers. It is difficult to be intimate and critical at the same time with a President—or anybody else for that matter.

The author is at his best with Woodrow Wilson. This sketch is a real piece of insight accurately revealed. He saw the Princetonian just as he was and placed him upon a proper pedestal. Particularly interesting is his description of Mr. Wilson's stay at Bermuda the month before his inauguration. There can be no quarrel with the picture.

Mr. Thompson is plainly sorry that a kindly small-town editor was spoiled when the senatorial "gang" made Harding President, and he rightly embalms Coolidge as the "last Yankee". The things that come under his eye are correctly told so far as he chooses to tell them, but we must dissent from the eloquent "blurb" which declares this book to be "true iconoclasm" and "the breaking of false idols". Instead, he has given each one a fresh coat of luminous paint. And why does he term John F. Hylan, eight years mayor of New York, whom he does not claim to have met, "a moronic blatherskite"?

DON C. SEITZ

THE LETTERS OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD *edited by J. Middleton Murry* (KNOPF; TWO VOLS.; $7.50)

WHEN her *Journal* was published a year ago, it seemed that Katherine Mansfield had revealed her secret, intimate life with extraordinary completeness. The assumption was premature. Compared with these poignantly candid letters, the *Journal* was a fragmentary sketch whose outlines had not been shaded or filled in. It was essentially a writer's notebook and, though it laid bare her ardent sensitiveness, her luminous honesty, the fervor of her passion for writing, it was reticent about the outward circumstances which so tormented Katherine Mansfield's spirit. It emphasized her approach to the world as an artist rather than as a human being.

Most of these letters were written to Middleton Murry and therein lies half the secret of Katherine Mansfield's tragedy. Both intellectually and emotionally, she was bound to her husband with peculiar closeness; yet it was her fate perpetually to be separated from him by the urgency of her quest for health. She asked little of life—a home and a garden, children, the companionship of her husband, time and strength to accomplish her work. All these were denied her. Exiled from Eng-

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land by its treacherous climate, she spent the better part of her last ten years abroad in loneliness, poverty and racking pain. She who had so rare a capacity for friendship, who longed to taste life as fully as possible, was isolated from contact with her kind.

Yet she never lost her courage, her humor, her breathless delight in the physical beauty of the world and in the mere adventure of living. She was more alive than other people, more delicately attuned to experience. "I must make you *see* this," she often wrote in her letters, and because her response to sensuous loveliness was so finely tempered, her passion to convey the exact quality of her sensations so intense, the descriptions in which these letters abound share the magic of her stories. She was never less than completely honest with her friends—was, indeed, generously and recklessly self-revealing. There is nothing trivial or perfunctory in her letters. They are fragments of her very being, sometimes quick with gaiety and humor, sometimes unbearably poignant in their alterations of ecstasy and anguish.

Although there are fewer direct references to her work than in the *Journal,* one is constantly aware of her fierce pride and joy in being a writer. Katherine Mansfield had a keen, an almost arrogant, sense of her calling and, in consequence, was bitterly contemptuous of those artists who betrayed their art by falsification, by refusing to accept life courageously and unreservedly. Only perfect truth could satisfy her. There is a rare unity between her personality and her work, because she struggled so ardently to purge both of artifice and impurity. Her letters are a record of that struggle. They reflect, with exquisite clarity, the processes of a creative spirit which was singularly untainted. Despite its beauty, Katherine Mansfield's work had narrow limitations, but few writers have succeeded to an equal degree in fusing art and living into one clear flame.

EDITH H. WALTON

MYTHS AFTER LINCOLN *by Lloyd Lewis* (HARCOURT, BRACE; $3.50)

JOHN WILKES BOOTH *by Francis Wilson* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN; $4.50)

VERBAL biography was the earliest form of literature. Romance made the heroes of antiquity patron saints and gods, supernatural beings who, disguised as men, had spent a short time on earth. Most fascinating of all were the legends of gods who died martyrs to a noble, human cause.

When no other race or age had been successful in freeing its imagination of these superstitions, it was not unnatural for the American temperament to seek to make George Washington a hero of folk-lore. But his life was too formal a record of perfection and completely untouched by tragedy; his memory could be revered, but as a mythical god he could not excite sympathy. Eventually came the great national figure whose career was the very stuff of drama and an inexhaustible impetus to legend-building.

A collection of semi-mystical tales dealing with the personality of the martyr president, his assassin, Booth, and the latter's numerous doubles (as exploited by reward seekers and by notoriety lovers) has been made into Mr. Lewis's *Myths After Lincoln.* Writing in the moods of the different episodes, the author organizes and re-tells the stories attractively. The achievement is something more than editing and something less than creating. The volume is a splendid preface to Mr. Wilson's biography, for the best of the myths are those centering on the assassination.

Lincoln's preoccupation, a week before his death, with that passage from his favorite play, *Macbeth:*

> Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well:
> Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
> Can touch him further.

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was a strange omen. So, too, was that dream which he described to his Cabinet, only a few hours before the end. "I seemed to be in a singular and indescribable vessel, and to be moving with great rapidity toward a dark and indefinite shore."

All that, of course, was before. Later, it was not so strange that in Illinois the brown thrush was not heard singing for a whole year after he had been laid in his tomb; nor that regularly, at midnight on a certain day in April, track-walkers and section-hands on the New York Central Railroad should see a ghost train pass along the route that Lincoln's funeral train took.

A real villain with a really romantic background, John Wilkes Booth has proved an excellent demon-hero, around whom many myths have been built. His biographer works on a theory of temporary insanity, influenced by an unreasoned love for the cause of Booth's native South. His original plan was to kidnap Lincoln and to present him as a gift to the authorities in Richmond. Failing this, and unbalanced both by Lee's surrender and, subsequently, by too much liquor, he turned to murder. Mr. Wilson is very sympathetic with the subject of his biography. Although he fully acknowledges Booth's crime, the book as a whole is intended to give the impression that the "sorrow of it is that one so gifted and personally so attractive should have been engulfed by an hallucination". Willing as the reader may be to accept this point of view, if he is entirely unprejudiced at the start it is unlikely that the book will convince him of anything or impress him greatly, despite its carefully documented text.

J. DANA TASKER

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ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

THE MOTIVES OF PROTEUS *by José E. Rodó* (BRENTANO'S; $4.00)

IN AN essay written a dozen years ago, at the time of Rodó's death, and now grafted on this volume by way of introduction, Havelock Ellis discussed at some length the contrast between the souls of North and South America. As a favorable example of the gracious Latin tradition to oppose to the triumphant utilitarian spirit of Anglo-Saxondom, he chose one of the gently philosophical works of Rodó, the most distinguished Uruguayan man of letters and, indeed, one of the foremost writers of Castilian prose in his generation. The first book by this important author to be translated into English is, so far as I am aware, *The Motives of Proteus*.

In substance this essay is a leisurely meditation on the art of living. Its elaborate convolutions are closely packed with illustrations suggested by a wide acquaintance with classical and modern European biography, and starred here and there with fables delicately imagined as the Platonic myths. The charm of these little stories is enhanced by the long, unhurried undulations of Rodó's prose, which even in the rather unidiomatic translation of Señor Angel Flores preserves its grave and supple movement. Besides the nervous staccato of our manuals of popular philosophy these pages afford as startling a contrast as that in Mr. Masefield's poem between the pitching British coaster and the stately Spanish galleon laden with exotic treasure.

The basis of Rodó's thinking is equally far removed from anything that—forgetting the now considerable claims of our neighbors to the south—we are narrowly accustomed to call "American". In his vision of the good life he calmly ignores mechanical progress, business efficiency, sales psychology, industrial production, morality by legislation, and all the other elements in Main Street's picture of the perfect state. His sole concern is to suggest how the individual human being may deliver himself from slow petrefaction or violent revolt against the blankness of routine.

To live in the finest sense, Rodó holds, is to meet the inevitable changes of life by an orderly self-renewal directed toward the discovery and practice of whatever special vocation calls the individual aptitudes into completest play. A good society is one made up of men and women who know the satisfaction of self-fulfilment. All else is meaningless. *The Motives of Proteus* elaborates with majestic instancy the various steps in the progress toward a life organized as an esthetic achievement and so transmuted into an "art which converts us, not into masters of Destiny, because this is not possible for men and not even for gods, but into her competitors and rivals, after having ceased to be her slaves".

If among the successful possessors of North America there are, as alleged, those who find themselves dissatisfied with the pursuit of mechanical ends, then for them the words of this South American sage will prove good neighborly advice. Rodó stands at the elbow of all who are sick and stifled by the ways of an acquisitive society, speaking with the authority of a skillful physician of souls: "Sir or Madam, it is no wonder you are bored by the shabby round of your existence. *You* are the genius type. Try life on the terms of art". And straightway the wind, faintly perfumed like a Medici chest, begins to blow again.

GEORGE F. WHICHER

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ENGLISH PROSE STYLE *by Herbert Read* (HENRY HOLT; $2.50)

MR. HERBERT READ is a sound and reliable critic, of the painstaking sort, and his book on style is, if not brilliant, at any rate an extremely useful and careful survey of a difficult subject. In the last analysis, style is the man. When we come to the affair of analyzing a man or personality as it reveals itself in a literary style, we come to an affair which might baffle even a psycho-analyst. At most we can hold the thing up to the light and see it sparkle. We can say of it that it has this color or that or that it contains such-and-such a proportion of this or that ingredient. We will come no nearer, or little nearer, to a profound understanding of its causes, or to acquiring, by so superficial a scrutiny, a brilliant or beautiful or individual style for ourselves. Mr. Read, of course, knows this and, on the whole, he has gone about his work very sensibly: he has given us a wide range of quotation from English prose, admirably commented upon. This, alone, would make his book exceedingly useful to the student of English literature and would sharpen his instinct for those vague qualities which make a style good or bad.

When Mr. Read is on more theoretical ground, one is not always quite so sure of him. He tends to a perilous kind of abstraction, no doubt forced upon him by the shadowy nature of his subject and by his desire to formulate large and general rules which might be universally applicable. Unfortunately, it is precisely when we attempt this kind of formulation that we involve ourselves, almost inevitably, in those simplifications of category which lead us either into a vagueness so glassy as to be useless or into downright psychological error. For example, "When thought is apprehended emotionally, by a process which we shall be careful to define, we give persuasive power to intelligence, and when sensibility and emotion are conjoined we get a direct form of expression which we shall consider under the heading of personality". This sounds very well, until we try to extract a valid meaning from it. But one suspects that one will get little "forrader" with this delicate business by an intellectual stalking so heavy-footed. Either we must go all the way toward the psychological end of our approach, as Kostyleff and others have tried to do—going right *under* such abstractions as "sensibility", "intelligence", "emotion", "personality"—or we must content ourselves with an approach frankly analogical and poetic. Mr. Read tends to fall between, and to use such terms as the above too discretely and solidly, and too much as if they corresponded to verifiable facts.

CONRAD AIKEN

THE STRANGE NECESSITY *by Rebecca West* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN; $3.00)

THERE was a time when Miss Rebecca West was a regular contributor of critical articles and reviews to *The New Statesman* in London; and from that time dates her reputation as a sort of feminine *enfant terrible* of criticism. It is no exaggeration to say that a great many people used to read *The New Statesman* solely because Miss West was usually to be found there and could invariably be counted on to be amusing, witty, very much to the point and, perhaps, usefully destructive. She had a merciless eye for sentimentality in any form and, if one thing delighted her more than any other, it was the exposure of any sort of literary sham. She gave and expected no quarter and she was treated by her fellow critics with the greatest respect, not to say gingerliness.

Nevertheless, one suspects that Miss West belongs rather with the type of journalist-critic than with that soberer and perhaps duller company who, caring little whether their audience is amused or not, give themselves up to a pure passion for exploration or analysis. There is a good deal of the show-woman in her. She is frankly and charm-

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ingly pleased with her own intelligence and with the fact that it is she, Miss West, a very wise and very shrewd and very emancipated young Englishwoman of the Twentieth Century, who is being intelligent. Her approach is a highly personal one; any literary problem is *her* literary problem; and in the very foreground of the literary scene, lest it be allowed to become too bitterly abstract for a degenerate generation too long nourished on newspapers and movies to be responsive, we have Miss West herself engagingly posed with her gloves and her parasol, her passport and her ticket for the Blue Train and, incidentally, under her arm, her copy of *Ulysses*.

And she makes a very good show of it, too. Her eager discovery of the necessity for Miss West of great art—with Mr. Joyce as the Virgil who guides her through the underworld—is made into a very entertaining and useful book. Her notion of art as a kind of collective super-cortex of the human mind is well deployed, with a good deal of psychological and biological reference; and her comments by the way on *Ulysses* and Proust and Mr. George Moore and Mr. Yeats are often exceedingly good, especially her analysis of the sentimentalism of Mr. Joyce, which will make many admirers of *Ulysses* very uncomfortable. All the same, one begins after a little to feel that Miss West is a shade too careless with us. She is in a hurry—she has so much to do—tea in Montmartre, Versailles to be visited, a pair of hats to be bought, letters to be answered—and one has the impression that she is talking rapidly to us over her shoulder as she departs for Antibes. Her pages become a little bit garrulous, a little bit shapeless; her sentences attenuate themselves from cursive to discursive; now and then she actually misuses a good word like "fundament". In short, we begin to discover that she writes pretty badly. This is a great pity, for she *is* intelligent, as her excellent little monograph on Henry James has already proved for us. If she could somehow manage to treat her audience a little less as if it were gathered for tea and her writers a little less as if they were dilapidated lions collected for the occasion to have their manes combed and their tails pulled—one might feel surer of her future position. As it is, one feels that perhaps her years are numbered.

CONRAD AIKEN

THE GARMENT OF PRAISE: THE NECESSITY FOR POETRY *by Eleanor Carroll Chilton and Herbert Agar* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN; $5.00)

WITH dignity and conviction, Eleanor Chilton and Herbert Agar, who are themselves makers of verse of some merit, have written a defense of poesy for our age. Their book is well informed by scholarship, agreeably written, and genuinely thoughtful. I hope that it will be widely read, for it should both enlarge contemporary perspectives on poetry and restore some standards we have neglected to keep in mind.

At the beginning, the authors set forth their hierarchy of poetic values. One rises, according to them, from a poetry of virtuosity exemplified in Swinburne's *Ballad of Dreamland* to poetry of vision as in Keats's *Ode to A Nightingale* and finally to poetry of prophecy with Dante and Milton as the foremost examples. This is well enough, though a psychological progression from sentiment (minor verse) to reflective emotion (major verse) to impersonal delight (minor poetry) to, at last, ecstasy (major poetry) will tell us more about the topography and the dwellers of Parnassus, and will avoid the cant about the "spirit" and "spirituality" into which these authors often lapse.

Then comes a quite admirable and refreshing history of English poetry which I think is the most valuable feature of *The Garment of Praise*. The authors know English history almost as well as English poetry and succeed in linking them without straining either. Miss Chilton is bold enough to say that

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"Langland attempted to write great poetry, and Chaucer succeeded greatly in writing poetry which made no attempt to be great"; and Mr. Agar asks us to do what Ezra Pound has scoffed at, namely, to venerate Milton for his fusion of reason and passion into prophecy. Mr. Agar also questions the conventional estimate of the Renaissance which we now uncritically accept. And Miss Chilton advances Shelley as a poet who sincerely faced the great dilemmas of modernity and who forged a "sword of lightning" to conquer them.

The last section of the book—"Poetry and the World To-day", it is called—is weak in contrast. The negative voices of our time are powerful and demand some enormous effort on our part to prove them, not wholly wrong, but at least insufficient in their charges. Miss Chilton and Mr. Agar have a natural dislike of materialism, mechanism, determinism, and so on, but their affirmations in favor of idealism and the freedom of the spirit are too much in the nature of votes and sound a little faint in the presence of strong doubters. Mr. Agar in fact is weakly wistful when he writes of modern man: "A little peace is all he needs, a little rest from progress". The party of the Spirit, I should say, must exhaust scepticism first before it is entitled to any affirmations. Matthew Arnold is quoted with approval for saying: "I have always insisted that the only right way to an outward transformation was through an inward one, and that the business for us and our age was the latter". But how to go about this business? That should be the practical necessity of the idealist who finds himself alive today.

GORHAM B. MUNSON

MODERN FRENCH PAINTERS *by Maurice Raynal* (BRENTANO'S; $7.50)

THE intemperate enthusiasm of the French for schools of art and movements of philosophy is betrayed in this book, in which, as he carefully explains, M. Raynal is only a historian, a collector. He has included, at least, one example of each modern school—the Fauves, Naturalists, Futurists, Eclectics, Idealists, Purists, Dadaists, Surréalistes and a few strays. Out of this extraordinary mélange, which in its variety would seem to need more than a couple of decades for its brewing, there emerge the figures of those painters who, though ostensibly joined with one school or another, cannot have been too serious about its lisping tenets. These few men —Derain, Vlaminck, Pascin, Picasso, Segonzac, Utrillo, Kisling—are too accomplished to have done anything but arrive at their esthetic philosophies alone. (But Matisse is absent from this book.)

M. Raynal has supplied, in addition to his critical introduction, a brief biography of each of the fifty artists whose work he reproduces. As a historian, he had to include the insolent offering of Joan Miro, the slick smartness of Van Dongen, the compressed urges of the Cubists and enough of the others to suggest that future ages will find today's "art movements" distinguished by three things: a taste for drawing with the flat of the crayon; a delight in running a black, furry line from one plane into another and a passion for guitars, without which, indeed, Cubist still life would have faded away.

PAUL HORGAN

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POETRY

EARTHBOUND, AND OTHER POEMS *by Helene Mullins* (HARPERS; $2.00)

BUCK FEVER *by Henry Morton Robinson* (DUFFIELD; $1.50)

MOUNTAIN AGAINST MOUNTAIN *by Arthur Davison Ficke* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN; $1.50)

THIS BLIND ROSE *by Humbert Wolfe* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN; $1.50)

IF ONE is a person at all addicted to the reading of poetry, he eventually discovers that he has an extraordinary flexibility of standard; in fact, that there are as many reasons for liking or disliking poetry as there are moods. There are times when no poetry on earth or in heaven could hold one's attention, when even Shakespeare seems to fall so lamentably short of the actual, seems so wizened by contrast with the so obvious terror and profundity of the mere fact of being, that one shuts *Hamlet* in despair and takes refuge in the contemplation of a fingernail. When one is in that mood, no voice is sovereign or, at least, no voice but nature's. The sea is the sea, and there is no language for it; everything, even consciousness itself, is a beginning; and in the beginning is no word. It is then that the reader looks at poetry as if it were the very last and greatest of man's absurdities.

But, also, one has opposite moods, in which one is willing to practice an extreme of catholicity. There is no equality under the sun, not every bird can be a thrush; not every poet can have been in and out of Ætna, like Shakespeare, and come back in flames to tell us about it. When the reader is in *that* mood, he finds room for the humbler poetry which is the milder report of a milder adventure. Of this poetry, we do not demand that it should carry an extreme incandescence of consciousness into extremities of agony or astonishments of ecstasy; nor do we expect it to be plumed like the phœnix in a sort of flaming dishevelment of language. But we ask it to be charming, and itself. If it is these, we like it. It tells us things, in fact, that major poetry, with its preoccupation with first and last things, scarcely has time for; it gives us —and this is its chief reason for being, its own excellence—the human soul in the dailiest of daily dress. It is content to doff the grandeurs, what Scott called the "big bow-wow style", and to chronicle the small beer of diurnal consciousness.

This is not meant in any pejorative sense; quite the contrary. One cannot forever be thinking about the stars and God and the paralyzing immensity of existence: the soul has its mild weathers and these, too, deserve a place in the history of our adventure. The minor poet—a term from which we hasten to extract any venom—is the historian of these milder weathers. He belongs to an honorable company and, if we assume that Mr. Humbert Wolfe, Mr. Ficke, Miss Mullins and Mr. Henry Morton Robinson are in this sense minor poets, we are not assuming anything which *a priori* does them discredit. Poetry must have its mother-of-pearl as well as its pearl, and these four poets give us poetry of that category. All of them can be read with pleasure; the verse of each has its own kind of skill or excellence. Mr. Wolfe has perhaps been somewhat harmed by too rapid a rise to prominence, and one suspects him to be over-producing. His recent work is disquietingly glib, nor is it saved, by a con-

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siderable technical adroitness, from that kind of thinness which suggests that the author is too often writing verse merely because he *wants* to write verse—there is neither any great pressure to do so nor is there anything very important to say. He can turn a lyric charmingly enough, he can be witty (as his *Lampoons* evidenced) and, when he manages to stop short of downright sentimentality, he manages sentiment nicely. At present, he perhaps tends too much to a use of assonance and double rhyme, sometimes with serious lapses of taste, not to say vulgarity. He might with profit be a little severer with himself, scrutinizing a shade more carefully in advance the theme which he has selected and avoiding a tendency to excessive limpidity.

Mr. Ficke has done charming things, notably in his *Sonnets of a Portrait Painter*. His new book is not so good as this and strikes one as falling a little too close, uncomfortably close, to a prose level. His sketches of scenes from the war are in the main not sharp enough, either as description or narration, to be vivid prose nor, on the other hand, quite deeply enough felt to generate that autonomous integrity of rhythm which accomplishes the miracle of making poetry out of statement. Of his narrative parable, *The Return of Christ,* one may make the same criticism. One feels that it would have been better either as a short story or as a poem more frankly formalized. The free verse which Mr. Ficke uses is, on the whole, shapeless and ungoverned and seriously detracts from the poem's speed and color.

With Mr. Robinson and Miss Mullins we are at once more at ease. Mr. Robinson has a definite and individual charm and a real gift for phrase. His galloping and vivid tale of "Blow-them-cuckoo, Bugling Pete," is very good entertainment, for the most part skillfully managed; though he falls, like Masefield, into a false sentimentality which mars the crisis of his story. Suddenly his "hard-boiled gob" becomes a full-fledged Pollyanna hero and gives vent to lace-and-ribbon sentiments which would have been more appropriate on a valentine of the 'nineties. His subsequent return to form is a relief but comes too late to save the poem from psychological fault. Something of the same sort is true of the other narrative poem, "The Pork-and-Beaner". In this case, it is a prize-fighter who suddenly goes into a kind of ululating minor key of hearts and flowers, which sorts ill with the rest of the poem, in which Mr. Robinson uses a method not unrelated to that of Mr. March in "The Wild Party": dramatic, not to say brutal, and perhaps a shade overdone. Mr. Robinson's shorter lyrics are often very charming and one suspects that it is here that he will eventually find his way.

Miss Mullins is technically the most accomplished of this quartette and offers, moreover, a wider range of theme and mood. She never lets one down, she can be counted on to bring her poem to a safe and skillful conclusion with a sufficiently clear fidelity to key. She has intelligence, too, and offers always enough of pure *idea* to keep her verse from becoming too merely and emotionally meditative. She is, in fact, a very charming poet and might, with a little more severity and a little more careful guard against facility, give us some first-rate work.

CONRAD AIKEN

THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN *by Alice Mary Kimball* (KNOPF; $2.50)

UNDER the slyly demure surface of these poems, rowdy life goes flaunting. Miss Kimball has a gift for story telling, such as is found sometimes in old country gossips who keep their cronies chortling far into the night, and a special humor, broad enough and sly enough to tickle the ribs of the very people at whom it is directed. But her particular distinction is her language. Here is the very accent of that part of New England that rashly produced her, used imaginatively, a drama in

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itself, potent in revealing character. The bold and outrageously amusing figures with which she points her impudent moral or throws a person or situation into satiric relief flash out with startling effect in the homespun speech.

> The morning light was gray as dish-water.
>
> If her big eyes had popped out any more
> They'd clattered like black marbles on the floor.
>
> There's no more spitting just for luxury.
>
> The backstairs sagged with Mrs. Cassius Grout
> Two hundred pounds of her if there was one
> And poured in funeral clothes and jellied down
> And all to pieces, sobbing fierce and hard,
> She leaned upon her pale and pindling son.

Miss Kimball is a naturalist of souls, and yet she is romantic enough to believe in a monstrous being with horns and trident who can be slain as effectively as David slew Goliath. She calls him stupidity and she sees him most often as sex repression. Perhaps New England is getting psychic indigestion, she implies. It has long been noted for its soul and has wrestled with it for generations, Cotton Mather in his way, Hawthorne in his and Melville in yet another. Perhaps it needs to wrestle with its body for a change. Certainly there is a pallor, a calm, a stagnant, scum-covered air about many New England communities today, "a smell of sudden death in the air", and certainly Miss Kimball stirs up the waters well.

She sings of old Pitchfork Janes who vowed never to look at or touch a woman, of the Savonarola of Adamant, Missouri, who prayed that his strange power with women

> Transmuted with a divine alchemy
> Will sell "The Horrors of the White Slave Traffic"
> To every farmer's wife in Iowa.

and of Stasia Whitsett,

> a noble-minded woman
> Descended from John Alden and Priscilla.
> No mammal that I've ever read about
> Took such outlandish tacks to bring forth young
> As Stasia.

Captain Ahab himself encountered no greater difficulties in his search for the White Whale than Stasia Whitsett as she fought her way through the jungle of customs, traditions and opinions that all too actively opposed her mating flight. Like Kate McQuigg, who tells the story, we may well be lost in thought about the strange to-do

> Of Nature as she works in kangaroo
> Ant, scorpion, cuttlefish, and marmoset,
> And bower-bird and eel and Stasia Whitsett.

ALICE BEAL PARSONS

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A VARIED SHELF

THE HISTORY OF BRITISH CIVILIZATION *by Esmé Wingfield-Stratford* (HARCOURT, BRACE; TWO VOLS.; $12.00)

IT IS no small task to compress within two volumes a history of British civilization from the time of the Piltdown skull to the catastrophic days of 1914; yet Mr. Wingfield-Stratford has done it with a skill that recalls Green's *History of the English People.* The clean pages, uncluttered by footnotes and vivid with telling phrase, are neither academic nor journalistic, but the work of an intellectual who follows English rather than Teutonic methods of scholarship. One begins to read and in five minutes the present has slipped away and one is back in primitive England, living again the conflict between Saxon and Norman, recognizing kinship with remote ancestors, understanding their struggles and sympathizing with their hopes and fears. The past has been recreated for us. Dead men walk the earth once more. Philosophies, Catholic and Protestant, systems of law, theories of kingcraft, principles of architecture, the economics of craft guilds—the body of ideals and institutions as well as the personalities of men—unfold themselves before us. There is a sense of continuity, of action and drama and the flux of life, that is as real as a stage play. Periods do not separate themselves mechanically nor great social movements become shut up in artificial bounds; they flow into each other and, as the stream of national experience broadens, it sweeps into an engulfing current the many-sided life of the English people. Politics, religion, economics, art, literature, manners, dress, customs, all fuse in a common integrated whole.

Is it true—this picture that Mr. Wingfield-Stratford spreads before us in panoramic amplitude? Is it an authentic rehabilitation of long dead centuries? How do I know? How can anybody know? The Piltdown skull has no tongue in its jaws and York Cathedral is only a pile of chiselled stone. We try to trace the pattern from broken odds and ends and the only outcome is a guess. History is imagination playing over a handful of facts, seeking their hidden meaning, fusing them into a whole; and the excellence of these two volumes lies in the fact that centuries of British civilization have taken on life in the scholar's imagination and he has made them live again in ours.

I know nothing about Mr. Wingfield-Stratford except what these pages tell me, and they reveal an eager intellectual, competent in scholarship, familiar with all the creeds, programs, pretenses and hocus-pocus of present-day civilization, who turns the light of a fine intelligence upon a past that he loves. He is an artist as well who can compress a civilization into a phrase and dissect a character with an adjective. He is dissatisfied with the dull spademen who dig up their little plots and label their findings history; and he will have nothing to do with the philosophical historians who turn out plaster-of-paris casts of their own prejudices. He is, rather, a humanist whose heart goes out to the lovely dreams of Sir Thomas More; who puts aside the pessimism of the determinists and believes that by taking thought men may create a civilization worthy of the name; who looks forward wistfully to a potential Utopia as he looks back wistfully to the primitive Christian democracy before the rise of nationalism and capitalism set men by the ears and destroyed the commonwealth. Yet, he is a modern also, a sceptic in the matter of

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current *isms,* immunized against the fallacies of present hopes, who, while the spademen are digging and the philosophers are modelling their plaster grotesques, prefers to enter the past through other portals. Psychology, sympathy, imagination—with these he will draw his scattered facts to a pattern and write the biography of England.

It is an impossible task, of course—to penetrate the hearts and minds of countless generations of Englishmen, to understand their motives and judge their works—a job where one is certain to go wrong at every turn. Chronicle history is possible but, when it comes to disintegrating generations into individuals and reintegrating them into social wholes, writing the biography of civilization, it is not possible. Yet, somehow, the impossible must be done and, English fashion, Mr. Wingfield-Stratford has done it and to one reader's mind has done it beautifully. Who can know whether it is true or not?

VERNON LOUIS PARRINGTON

THIS BOOK-COLLECTING GAME *by A. Edward Newton* (LITTLE, BROWN; $5.00)

IN A little essay I once wrote about this author I said: "It is this knowing his books so well that constitutes much of the charm of Mr. Newton's writings about books. He knows what he is talking about and the variety of his tastes gives variety to his writings". To Mr. Newton book-collecting is the finest of indoor games and, as he says, it is a game in which each player may make his own rules. Probably Mr. Newton's first and most famous book, *The Amenities of Book-Collecting,* did more than any other to start people playing this game. This latest work, which he has proclaimed as his "bibliographical swan song", is destined to keep the players at it. Those who are looking for information about first editions, children's books, bindings, American literature, Dr. Johnson, the format of the English novel and a host of cognate subjects, will find it here, in language "suited to the meanest capacities", as the old schoolbooks used to say. But it is not the tabular information that one finds in encyclopaedias and many bibliographies. It is so cleverly worked into the story of his own books that one absorbs information without knowing it.

Mr. Newton's books are little masterpieces of the familiar and friendly essay. The by-product of book-collecting, he says, is the acquiring of friends, and, as in the case of some manufacturing concerns, the by-products have come to surpass the original product in value. In *This Book-Collecting Game* Mr. Newton not only talks about books and their authors, he makes personal excursions into literature and life. Once his foot slips—when he comes to telling others what to collect and gives a list of "One Hundred Good Novels", he is making the rules by which others are to play the game, which is contrary to his own dictum, although he carefully avoids calling them the hundred "best". In many respects this volume is more informative than any of its predecessors. But it retains, with the authority, the humor, the informality, the cheerful prejudice, the delightful personality which have made Mr. Newton a "collected" author himself, and the book, with its wealth of illustrations and its fine typography, will add to his circle of readers and friends.

GEORGE H. SARGENT

THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP *by Joan Lowell* (SIMON & SCHUSTER; $2.75)

SOME doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of this rattling chronicle of sixteen years and one month of life on the ocean waves. One critic has arisen to say that Joan Lowell's story of how she learned about Life from examining the innards of a female shark is biologically catawampus, since a shark is a fish and lays eggs, as a fish should. Miss Lowell's contention is that a shark is a mammal, like a whale. A careful investigation of the question reveals the fact that

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neither the critic nor Miss Lowell is altogether right. Some sharks lay eggs, while others are viviparous, and might, therefore, be used as texts for little lectures on sex, but none, so far as the biologists have admitted, actually suckle their young.

It is also currently reported that Miss Lowell's use of nautical terms might indicate more time spent in Hollywood than on the bounding billows, but a seafaring man pointed out to this reviewer that things aboard different ships are frequently called by different names. Miss Lowell does not lay claim to any broad experience at sea; she merely contends that she spent the first seventeen years of her life, minus eleven wasted months of her first year, on board her Old Man's schooner, which traded upon and down the South Sea in copra, guano, and lumber, and deep sea sailors have been found who were willing to make affidavits before notaries testifying that Miss Lowell when and where and for as long as her book says she did.

One must take a stand in such a quarrel, and I line up with Miss Lowell, without knowing anything to speak of about ships, outside of what I have read about them and what I picked up during some months as waterfront reporter in a Gulf Coast port. For one thing, I have shaken hands with Miss Lowell, which is an experience, and for another, I have—at her request—tried to pinch one of her arms, which was as futile as trying to pinch a chrome steel bar. She looks and talks and acts authentic. Some of her yarn seems a bit colored by her stay in movie centers and on the stage, but colored or not, it is first-rate stuff.

Some of the old hokum gets into the story, and occasionally her seafaring men seem almost too noble. Also, her r'arin' Papa, who hits men so hard the crunch of their broken jawbones is audible all over the schooner, sounds a little fishy. It takes a punch to break a man's jaw even inaudibly, and to break one or two jawbones right out loud in a rough and tumble with short arm punches makes it seem that the Skipper missed his calling. Not even in that bloody shambles at Toledo when Jack Dempsey made hash of Jess Willard were there any jaws broken. One is inclined to suspect that Miss Lowell is sentimentalizing about her father, just as she exaggerates the pleasure to be had from a flogging from a rope's end.

But no matter what faults may be found in *The Cradle of the Deep,* it is highly entertaining reading. There are high spots in the book, such as the grewsome story of the cutting off of a sailor's arm with a safety razor and a marlinspike, the latter used to break the bone clean with a single blow. There is plenty of humor in the book, and there is a lot of salty cussing, for Miss Lowell learned to say "goddamed wind" at the age of two and she never reformed, at least so long as there were the wide open spaces of ocean for her to exercise her profanity in. She says somewhere that she could once curse for fifteen minutes without repeating herself, and this is an accomplishment not to be belittled, considering the tame and banal swearing one hears ashore, even from the drivers of seagoing taxicabs.

What has been written here is not in any sense literary criticism, for Miss Lowell's book is not at all literary. Occasionally there are highfalutin passages that are pseudo-literary, as might be expected in a book done by an unskilled hand, but on the whole the book comes out honest and square and salty. It has probably shocked several of the old ladies in Dubuque by this time, to their own inner delight and eventual spiritual benefit, and it is certain to give pleasure to every one who reads it with a kindly eye upon whatever flaws there may be in it. Miss Lowell, her publishers, and the Book-of-the-Month Club deserve congratulations all around. Likewise Edward L. Bernays and Hiram Motherwell, who encouraged her to write the story of her life.

HERSCHEL BRICKELL

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MEDIÆVAL CULTURE: AN INTRODUCTION TO DANTE AND HIS TIMES *by Karl Vossler* (HARCOURT, BRACE; TWO VOLS.; $8.00)

THIS is a book of 780 large octavo pages, many of them with notes at their bottom. As the book contains neither table of contents nor index, it must be taken in head-first and in steady gulps of absorption. It is not easy reading, and the poetic translation with which it is adorned gives one a dreary idea of the poet.

The work is addressed to the cultivated German, and begins thus: "One cannot speak to any cultivated German of Dante's *Divine Comedy* without reminding him of Goethe's *Faust*". This is followed by sixteen pages of talk about *Faust,* during which "Gretchen clasps hands with Beatrice", and Dante's work is incidentally a little disparaged: "The much admired consistency and clearness [of the *Divine Comedy*] is rather architectural than organic. To attain it required rather a master-builder than a creative poet." Nevertheless Mr. Vossler's endeavor is to hold an even balance between Goethe and Dante. His own moral obligation to write the book is clear to him.

"Only we Germans" he writes, "have a thoroughly personal, naïve and equally eminent poet to set beside the great Italian. And since *Faust* has come to be our loftiest and most cherished creation, and because we flatter ourselves that we are moderately familiar with it, we have a right to hope that we may approach the *Divine Comedy* with a prepared mind."

To Goethe himself, as everyone knows, Dante and his work were so antipathetic that Goethe seems never to have read Dante. But let that pass. Inasmuch as Goethe is the Gate and Portal to all Wisdom, the German has written up over him, *"Per me si va"* —and marches in, confident that Dante will be found somewhere inside.

In order to give the ingenuous reader some notion of the scale on which Mr. Vossler's work is conceived, I shall copy the chapter-heads of the first hundred pages:—Symbol and Religion: The Pre-Christian Belief in a Future Life: Babylonians and Assyrians: The Persians: The Greeks: Fusions of Religions and the Late Jewish Hereafter: Jesus and the Hereafter: Christ and the Hereafter: Paul and Dante, etc., etc. Through this cautious approach Mr. Vossler follows the stream of theology down to St. Augustine, St. Francis, and St. Bernard, and arrives at last at a verse of the *Paradiso* concerning Truth, which he quotes, and pays to Dante this magnificent compliment, "That is a courage for Truth as fine as Hegel could demand".

Mr. Vossler then returns to Symbol and Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy; Reaction in the Age of the Diadochi, etc. With page 108 we arrive at Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

If the book has a fault, it is monotony. The only things that interest Mr. Vossler are wiredrawn, metaphysical abstractions, and he has no obvious system of his own. He enlarges upon other men's themes—presumably on the conceptions of the great German metaphysicians—and he sometimes gets into an *impasse*. Thus on page 160 he says: "Like Lessing, Schiller and Fichte, Dante became an educator of his people. He did not feel himself primarily, as Goethe did, the mouthpiece of his age, nor a model for humankind, nor did he pose as such, but rather as a fellow worker and champion. This life-long devotion to practical rather than to artistic ends determined the character of Dante's future philosophic work". On page 165 Mr. Vossler has changed his mind about this very important point, and says, "We know that the innermost impulse [of the *Divine Comedy*] was mystical, not educational". Now surely Mr. Vossler should have brought the two passages into harmony before he printed them, and not left the reader to do the work for him.

The truth is that Mr. Vossler improvises; he goes forward and back and never gets through with a subject. On page 219 he has

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a chapter on Dante and Paul, a subject he had already dealt with on page 39; and the same may be said of his treatment of a dozen other matters. In short, the book is not a book, in any definite sense. Indeed, there is no reason why such rambling talk should not go on forever.

But here comes in the utility of his work. Mr. Vossler's learning is vast, inordinate, inclusive. He has read everything, and has gathered the Dante literature into a cyclopedia which—if it were only better arranged—would be admirable, and, as it is, is invaluable for any true scholar, as a dictionary of sources.

The ingenuous general reader will search the book in vain for Dante himself—for Dante is the only thing that is left out of it. Whenever the poet seems about to emerge from the cauldron his image is taken up by a congeries of technical, sharp-cutting wheels and instruments, and is turned into ribbons of dogmatic idea.

It was, I think, a mistake to translate into English the texts quoted from Dante's works: for any who uses the book is sure to need the Italian text. All commentaries on any passage become unmeaning when applied to a translation. Moreover readers of all classes who use such a book are sure to know Italian, or to want to know it.

Mr. Vossler's second volume is devoted to historic essays on Dante's precursors and contemporaries and on allegorical, classical and artistic questions, and these are followed by a canter—I should perhaps say a six months' personally conducted tour straight through the *Divine Comedy*.

The work concludes with a "Bibliographical Note by Mr. J. E. Spingarn". Such is the modest title of a thirty page summary of all the Dante literature, including popular works, translations and magazine articles in all modern languages. I will quote Mr. Spingarn's final words which give a happy and human *envoi* to Mr. Vossler's whole gigantic production "perhaps this Bibliographical Note, which is hardly more than a gesture of friendship and admiration for the author of this book, may best close with the tribute of a distinguished Italian philosopher: 'The work of Vossler remains the most powerful instrument which we possess for helping us to understand the art of Dante'". (Giovanni Gentile, *Frammenti di estetica e letteratura.*)

JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

DISARMAMENT *by Salvador de Madariaga* (COWARD-MCCANN; $5.00)

Not since John Maynard Keynes released secrets of the Peace Conference in his *Economic Consequences of the Peace,* nine years ago, has there been so intimate and so lively a book on the international scene as this. The fact is, indeed, that after the dust is blown off the old copy of Keynes one discovers that it was not nearly as good reading as is Madariaga. This Spaniard who has been director of the disarmament section of the League has a kind of French clarity of mind, and, as a Spaniard, protected by the Pyrenees, he feels entitled to blurt out honest opinions about British, Russian, Yankee, and—to a less degree—French policy. His whole argument is a plea for the League of Nations, but on almost every page he sticks a fine-pointed pin through some of the iridescent bubbles blown by more religious-minded leaguers.

"Questions of disarmament," he says, "resolve themselves into questions of security; and the questions of security into questions of international organization." "In the absence of a universal agreement never to use arms except on collective authority, armaments can only be increased; they can never be decreased." That is his thesis, and he weaves his way triumphantly to it over the dead bodies of a dozen commissions and conferences. Occasionally, one feels, he begs questions by selection of epithets; but always his story is documented and almost always it is lively. The Kellogg Pact he defines as America's

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agreement that she "would not go to war unless she wanted to and would arbitrate whenever she thought fit the points which her Senate would define". Mr. Coolidge's attempt to hold a disarmament conference reminds him of a second-rate orchestra conductor walking in after the first movement of a well-led performance of the Ninth Symphony and inviting the five leading performers to come outside and practise a concerto with him. The League, he feels, was already groping its way more intelligently toward solution of the problem; its program of sanctions was essentially a plan for collective self-defense; and the great difficulty which it faced, its heaviest handicap, was the abstention of the United States from its work.

One relishes his breezy comments that the United States and Italy are "in the growing and acquisitive stage of their development"; his acceptance of the Bolshevik enthusiasm for disarmament as sincere, because a disarmed world would be so much easier to revolutionize; his cold analysis of British moral proclamations; his intimate account of the sessions of the various disarmament commissions. But an occasional *caveat* is not out of place. After all, the League—which Señor Madariaga prefers to style the "world community"—had at least two sires—Clemenceau and Wilson—and was accepted by the French because it seemed so admirable an instrument for enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles. Memory of that fact has profoundly influenced American thinking on the question of sanctions, and retarded American acceptance of the program.

"Let no honest man," says Señor Madariaga, "suggest or imagine that this book has been written as another effort of League propaganda." I do not know what it is if it is not that; but I have never read more profound, more telling, or more sprightly League propaganda.

LEWIS S. GANNETT

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD *by Bertrand Russell* (NORTON; $3.00)

No ONE who has read with enthusiasm *Education and the Good Life, What I Believe, Philosophy,* or other expressions of Bertrand Russell's genius will wish to speak of a book bearing his name without paying tribute to the mind eager in pursuit of science, fearless in expression of conviction, wonderfully filled with knowledge, and ardent as Shelley in the desire to advance the good of his fellows. Countless readers must feel a personal debt to him for the training and inspiriting of their own thoughts and lives. But it must be said that *Our Knowledge of the External World* is not a book for the uninstructed general reader. A special taste for abstract logic and for the problems of epistemology, so repugnant to the majority of even intelligent people, will be required to understand and enjoy it. The common reader will not find in it, as he found in *Philosophy,* published in 1927, an exposition of modern thought and knowledge addressed to his capacities.

The present volume is composed of lectures delivered on the Lowell foundation in Boston in 1914. It has been revised in some particulars, as the revolutionary discoveries of recent years in physics required. The book is explained as "an attempt to show, by means of examples, the nature, capacity, and limitations of the logical-analytic method in philosophy. This method . . . has . . . increasingly forced itself upon me as something perfectly definite, capable of embodiment in maxims, and adequate, in all branches of philosophy, to yield whatever objective scientific knowledge it is possible to obtain. Most of the methods hitherto practised have professed to lead to more ambitious results than any that logical analysis can claim to reach, but unfortunately these results have always been such as many competent philosophers considered inadmissible. Regarded merely as

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hypotheses and as aids to imagination, the great systems of the past serve a very useful purpose . . . But something different is required if philosophy is to become a science, and to aim at results independent of the tastes and temperament of the philosopher who advocates them".

In accordance with this plan, Mr. Russell explains by typical examples the methods and limitations of traditional logic, and contrasts with them newer developments of logic (especially mathematical) which have solved antinomies and led to impersonal knowledge where before contradictory opinion, often obscured by personal desires, prevailed. Speaking of one limitation of traditional logic, he writes: "The belief . . . that all propositions are of the subject-predicate form . . . has rendered most philosophers incapable of giving any account of the world of science and daily life. If they had been honestly anxious to give such an account, they would probably have discovered their error very quickly; but most of them were less anxious to understand the world of science and daily life, than to convict it of unreality in the interests of a super-sensible 'real' world".

In the course of illustrating the method of logical analysis, Mr. Russell discusses the relation of the scientific world explored by physics to the familiar world of experience; he explains the mathematical theory of continuity, by which he seeks to throw light on the conceptions of time and space, and the mathematical theory of infinity, by which the famous puzzles of Zeno are solved. He concludes with a chapter on causation and free will. A bath in these astringent waters will injure no brain. But the intelligent general reader, in search of a large survey of modern thought and science and its relation to what we feel to be the reality of things, may be advised to seek it in Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World*. There, even more than in Mr. Russell's own *Philosophy,* all that scientific ingenuity illuminated by human understanding can do for him is brilliantly done.

THEODORE MORRISON

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THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

Compiled by Frank Parker Stockbridge, Life Member of the American Library Association, in Co-operation with the Public Libraries of America

Every little while it is the function of this report to chronicle the leap of a new book from absolutely nowhere into one of the high places in the Monthly Score. That occurs only when an old favorite among the authors, beloved of the library borrowers, comes forth with a new volume. *Giants in the Earth* was one of the most persistently popular books for a matter of more than a year. It needed, therefore, only Professor Rölvaag's name on the backbone of a new title to set the readers clamoring for it and the circulation departments requisitioning extra copies by the score. The other two new titles appearing this month can be classed as inevitable. In these days everybody is seeking new light on old themes and biography, if it is fairly well done, can always get a wide reading even when concerned with a personage only moderately well known. —F.P.S.

FICTION

1. OLD PYBUS	*Warwick Deeping*	KNOPF
2. PEDER VICTORIOUS *	*O. E. Rölvaag*	HARPERS
3. SILVER SLIPPERS	*Temple Bailey*	PENN
4. POINT COUNTER POINT	*Aldous Huxley*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
5. HARNESS	*A. Hamilton Gibbs*	LITTLE, BROWN
6. ALL KNEELING	*Anne Parrish*	HARPERS
7. THE GREENE MURDER CASE	*S. S. Van Dine*	SCRIBNER'S
8. SWAN SONG	*John Galsworthy*	SCRIBNER'S
9. BAD GIRL	*Viña Delmar*	HARCOURT, BRACE
10. SILAS BRADFORD'S BOY	*Joseph C. Lincoln*	APPLETON
11. THE BRIDGE OF SAN LUIS REY	*Thornton Wilder*	BONI
12. THE STRANGE CASE OF MISS ANNIE SPRAGG	*Louis Bromfield*	STOKES

GENERAL

1. ELIZABETH AND ESSEX	*Lytton Strachey*	HARCOURT, BRACE
2. STRANGE INTERLUDE	*Eugene O'Neill*	LIVERIGHT
3. MOTHER INDIA	*Katherine Mayo*	HARCOURT, BRACE
4. JOHN BROWN'S BODY	*Stephen Vincent Benét*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
5. WHITHER MANKIND?	*Charles A. Beard*	LONGMANS, GREEN
6. RASPUTIN *	*René Fülöp-Miller*	VIKING
7. THE ROYAL ROAD TO ROMANCE	*Richard Halliburton*	BOBBS-MERRILL
8. NAPOLEON	*Emil Ludwig*	LIVERIGHT
9. GOETHE	*Emil Ludwig*	PUTNAM
10. ABRAHAM LINCOLN	*Albert J. Beveridge*	BOBBS-MERRILL
11. MEET GENERAL GRANT *	*W. E. Woodward*	LIVERIGHT
12. MY LIFE	*Isadora Duncan*	LIVERIGHT

* *This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.*

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BON VOYAGE

It was many years ago, in this rapidly moving modern world of ours almost an æon of time, that Rudyard Kipling wrote: "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". The theory may have been sound back in the age of innocence when the world was young, with the Nineteenth Century swiftly drawing to its close, but today every traveller who crosses the imaginary boundary known as "East of Suez", murmuring the familiar lines, is inclined to shake his head in doubt. May the writer recall one or two personal impressions?

A Christmas morning in Nazareth two years ago. Backed up against the walls of the sloping, cobbly street leading up to the Casa Nova Monastery, two lines of cars, mostly of American make. Voices, raucous, from Texas and Indiana and Ohio. Here was the West. But, then, out of the East, a stately caravan, camels and men, winding its way unconcernedly between the lines of cars. East and West were meeting.

A night in Java. The equatorial sky reflecting the lights of a cinema theatre proclaiming that "The Iron Horse" was being presented within. An afternoon in Tokio. Crowds of little brown men, garbed in conventional European attire and clinging to umbrellas, trying to fight their way into already over-filled tram cars. The reflection came that, East or West, it was all much the same, all the world straphanging in its mad rush for the five-fifteen.

There are many angles to Richard Wilhelm's *The Soul of China* (Harcourt, Brace, $3.75). To his subject the author brings twenty-five years of experience and a Teutonic thoroughness and system. To his eyes East and West are meeting at last. Once the verdict of the colonists in the Far East was that "in China people count by centuries". That is no longer true. Today, in China, life proceeds at a feverish speed.

The attention of the traveller from the West, who has gone through the ordeal of trying to satisfy a normal appetite by a Chinese dinner, is called to the chapter on "Social Intercourse". It might have been called "Peking *à la Carte*". Though the occidental palate is not likely to appreciate them, China has had her Vatels and her Brillat-Savarins. The traditions of the Chinese cuisine trace back to I Yin, of the Third Century, B. C.

There is in Peking one restaurant keeper who has builded a fortune on his knowledge of the psychology of advertising. He kills a pig every day. The various parts of the meat are then prepared in the most cunning manner so that the greatest variety of dishes appears on the menu. People throng to the place at an early hour so that frequently the whole pig has been eaten shortly after noon. The inn is then closed. Neither money nor persuasion can induce the innkeeper to depart from this habit. His ruthless method is, of course, the best propaganda.

In Dr. Johan Gunnar Andersson's *The Dragon and the Foreign Devils* (Little, Brown, $4.00), a Swedish observer endorses the German view of the changing China. Dr. Andersson went to China in 1914 as counsellor to the Chinese Government for the organizing of geological research. The subsequent years have been almost entirely devoted to the study of the country and her problems. Figuratively, ages separate the China of the Boxer Rebellion and the China of today. A superannuated China, profoundly ignorant of the occident, started the Boxer movement. Now the land of the Dragon is being stirred by the awakening of a national feeling that includes the great mass of the people. Here is an attempt to explain

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the Chinese situation by an imaginary parallel in the United States:

Suppose the government at Washington had for nine years past had no real influence outside the capital but was, on the contrary, compelled to make a compromise between the changing ideas of the contending generals. Suppose, further, that a doctrinaire demagogue had started an independent government in New Orleans in an attempt to come into touch with and win recognition from certain foreign powers, threatening at the same time to make a punitive expedition against Washington. Assume that the southwestern states, California, Arizona and New Mexico, had declared themselves independent under a rebellious general. Imagine two uncommonly powerful generals in almost unbroken feud with each other ruling, one in the northwestern states, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana—the other in the rich northwestern states between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic; these "independent" generals meanwhile receiving aid in money and war munitions, one from England, the other from Japan, while the Canadian Soviet Republic was exciting your students with red propaganda and acting especially in collusion with the demagogue down in New Orleans.

Fully one-half of John C. Van Dyke's *In Java* (Scribner's, $2.50) is devoted to the approach to the island that the author calls "the painter's paradise". There are two direct ways of approaching the Dutch East Indies, one from Singapore at the north and the other from Australia at the south. Mr. Van Dyke vastly prefers the latter way by which the ship passes mountainous shores and winds among a thousand islands. Most of these islands are Robinson Crusoe islands. There are probably no footprints of savages in the sands along their beaches, but there might be signs or sounds of goats or parrots. And the sea that surrounds them is the home of many sea serpents, true enough sea serpents though only six or eight feet long.

Mr. Van Dyke pays high tribute to the Dutch as colonists and administrators, volunteering the opinion that both the United States and England "could learn much from them, if they would". The Dutch do not attempt to impose their ideas and morals upon the natives. They protect the native and allow him to develop according to his own conscience and traditions. They are not trying to change him into a Dutchman. Even in the small matter of costume they have not asked him to wear Dutch shoes, shirts and hats, but have allowed him to go his own way barefooted and in *sarong*. Of course, being Dutch, they have bisected the country freely with canals and, if it were feasible, would no doubt like to sink a part of the land below the sea level in order that they might have the pleasure of building dikes —merely for the reason that it would make them feel more at home.

Persian Days, by Copley Amory, Jr., (Houghton Mifflin, $4.50) is frankly informal, based upon the notes and impressions of a four weeks' trip. In Persia, too, East and West are slowly but surely drawing closer together. The student, the young officer or the clerk is taking more note of what goes on in the outside world and is giving thought to the future, instead of mechanically accepting the present and complacently pointing down the long vistas of his country's past. Persia has a particular interest for Americans because of the country's recent turning to the United States and her employment of private American citizens to help her put her house in order.

There is one chapter in Mr. Amory's book that should have a definite appeal to many Americans without the desire for travel, even vicarious travel. That deals with the cherished and much sought Persian rug. In the plant of a European rug company in Kerman, Mr. Amory was told a variety of facts; of the ignorance of the American rug-buying public, who prefer that a new rug be washed in chemicals, which cuts its life in half or more, but which produces a glossy sheen for a few months that old rugs get through years of contact with woollen stockinged

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feet; that Persian rugs cost as much or more in Persia today than they do abroad; that a Baluch rug is not woven in Baluchistan, but by nomad Baluchi far to the north in Khorasan; a Kermanshah is not woven in or near the city of that name, but in Kerman, miles to the west; and a Bokhara, a name adopted by western trade and familiar at home, is made by Turcoman tribes, and but rarely in the political state of Bokhara.

In Trowbridge Hall's *Egypt in Silhouette* (Macmillan, $2.50) the muezzin, from the mosque minaret, still calls the faithful to prayer; the Nile rolls on, on its way to the sea, as it did in the days of the Pharaohs; the Pyramids of forty centuries still look down upon the beholder; but old and new, East and West, meet on the common ground of the emancipated woman. Today woman is playing a tremendous part in the awakening of Egypt. Yet, twenty-five years ago, when Kassem Bey Amin, a learned Chancellor of the Court of Assizes, published a book on the emancipation of woman, he was practically ostracized by the legal profession and put down as mad by the rest of Cairo.

Now the women of Egypt are demanding equality in the education of the sexes; reforms in all laws concerning marriage; the prohibition of polygamy; and the restricting of divorces to those sanctioned by a court of justice. Yet the battle is not entirely won. The most modern of Egyptian women would, in her own country, refuse to be seen riding in a motor car with a man other than a relative, even if he were white-haired and accompanied by his wife.

East of Suez and west of Suez range the seas of *John Cameron's Odyssey* by Andrew Farrell (Macmillan, $4.50). Here is a narrative of yesterday, when the Kipling lines held true, when, to believe the old mariners who went down to them in sailing ships, the Seven Seas were saltier than they are in our modern age. There is the flavor of extremely salty seas in this book, the story of a Scotchman who for the thirty years between 1867 and 1897 navigated the Atlantic, the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. Particularly vivid are the pictures of the old Pacific. Here are the South Sea Islands long before the colorful Frederick O'Brien discovered them; before Robert Louis Stevenson went to live at Vailima; before the strange painter, Paul Gauguin, in his revolt against the conventions of Europe, sought out these islands to wallow in their care-free abandon.

John Cameron sailed in many ships that spread their canvases to the trades or the "brave west winds"; in ships as unfit as the old *Judea* of Conrad's *Youth;* in ships sent to sea to founder in order that the owners might reap the rewards of over-insurance. There is the stirring reading of high adventure in *John Cameron's Odyssey*. What does it matter if the hero's behavior at times bewrayeth him for a bit of a scamp? Those mariners of the old oceans, facing storm, wreck and the constant menace of sudden death, did not grow into plaster saints.

East and West came closer together with the gesture of the Egyptian woman who tossed away her yashmak; the gap between the two civilizations was further bridged when, as Harry A. Franck expresses it in *The Fringe of the Moslem World* (Century, $4.00), the Turk "threw his sacred fez into the dustheap". For this book Mr. Franck landed at Alexandria, went up the Nile and then journeyed northward to Turkey. The "new" Turkey, in particular, he found decidedly and, at times, painfully new.

At Angora, the new Turkish capital, he found a building boom that "beats that of Florida"; also, "prices that are criminal offenses in almost any country except our own dear land". If that did not make him feel at home, there were "girls crowding you out of the barber shops, though as yet there are twice as many men as women in Angora . . . In old hill bound Angora an uncovered face is a rarity; in the new Angora a veiled face is as unknown as in Washington."

ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

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NOTES ON NEW BOOKS—(*continued*)

Fiction

THE SPINNER OF THE YEARS *by Phyllis E. Bentley* (HENKLE. $2.50)

LIFE becomes stale for Imogen Armitage after the suicide of her lover. From sheer weariness and inertia, she marries a rich but uncouth manufacturer—the best matrimonial bargain her small English town affords. One follows, thereafter, the slow disintegration of her character, the wrecking of her marriage, its final dissolution in tragedy. This first novel suffers from stiffness but it is at times curiously moving.

THE BLACKER THE BERRY *by Wallace Thurman* (MACAULAY. $2.50)

HARLEM, of course, is no longer virgin territory, but Wallace Thurman has managed, nevertheless, to do a little pioneering. His Emma Lou, who is so lusciously and deplorably black, suffers from the prejudices of her own people and not from the much vaunted cruelty of a white world. Despite her college education, she finds that she cannot make her way in a society which has learned to put a high premium on lightness of complexion. Weak and over-conscious of her extreme blackness, she sinks from depth to depth of emotional degradation until she at last frees herself from the unscrupulous degenerate who has exploited her. A sordid, rather heavily written novel, although it explores acutely bypaths of Negro psychology.

DARKENED ROOMS *by Philip Gibbs* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

TABLE tapping and automatic writing become quite bearable in this competent tale of charlatanism. Because of their urgent need to believe in a reunion beyond the grave, Rose Jaffrey and Adrian Mallard are easy victims to the cunning of Jago, the medium. Their tragedy, however, is less absorbing than the exposure of Jago's methods and of his curious, perverted psychology. Spiritualism is the hero or, rather, the villain of this piece and, in comparison, the two lovers are insignificant.

SOUVENIR *by Floyd Dell* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

MR. DELL is chiefly concerned, in this sequel to *Moon-Calf* and *The Briary Bush*, with the emotions of Felix Fay on becoming acquainted with his adolescent son, from whom he has been parted for ten years. The situation is a provocative one, but Mr. Dell only half succeeds in making Felix Fay's reactions plausible. The novel includes a love affair between young Fay and Helen—the niece of Felix's sensible, modern second wife, Connie—sometimes objectively viewed from the point of view of Felix and Connie, sometimes placed before us directly through the eyes of the suffering participants. The most satisfactory sections of the book deal with the Village, on which Mr. Dell is an authority.

YOUTH RIDES OUT *by Beatrice Kean Seymour* (KNOPF. $2.50)

MISS SEYMOUR tells the story of father and son, each of whom married the wrong woman, misled by sexual attraction. Although the story of the elder Borden's marriage, being brief, is not altogether comprehensible, the harrowing and realistic detail of his son's marriage with the luxurious Camilla is both illuminating and vital. Lindsay Borden and Camilla had only one bond, and their struggle to keep this bond strong and important, against odds which became increasingly invincible, makes an unusually interesting story. Not only does Miss Seymour make clear the difference between these two characters; she succeeds also in portraying the inevitable distance between persons of fundamentally different environments, persons who have not merely individual idiosyncrasies which must be adjusted, but, even more deeply, the traditions of a class.

THE LOVER *by Naomi Royde-Smith* (HARPER. $2.50)

THIS brief romantic tale is supposed to convey the different attitudes of a pair of youthful lovers, toward one another and toward life. It fails to be convincing, because the style of the

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book, intended to be exquisite and remote, succeeds only in being vague and obscure, so that the characters emerge as the impossibly blurred fantasies of a day-dream instead of people. The story of youthful and mysterious love is told in retrospect by the middle-aged man who suddenly encounters, after years of forgetfulness, first the picture he painted of his young sweetheart, and, on the same evening, the woman herself, terribly aged, but still with traces of the qualities he had loved in her twenty years before. The book lives up in every respect to the ideals of an obsolete romantic era.

ANOTHER PART OF THE WOOD *by Denis Mackail* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $2.50)

MR. MACKAIL'S jolly, carefree performance reminds one of a Varsity Show. His book was written, about a prankish girl named Bubbles, in a burst of spontaneous good feeling. It is possibly a book intended for adolescent tastes; but all of us fall, now and then, into the same careless mood as Mr. Mackail's and can be amused by a gay book while the major part of our minds take a holiday.

LEFT IN TRUST *by Juliet Wilbor Tompkins* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $2.00)

A FATHER leaves in trust a fortune which is to materialize when his illegitimate son is twenty-four. Obstacles thrust themselves, however, between the boy and his pot of gold. Around the world, from the Atlantic to Tahiti, he pursues his dark-haired girl and his slippery half-million, missing them always by narrow, but inflexible margins. Finally, of course, wealth and love plop neatly into his lap and the book ends rosily in the manner of all good fairy stories.

A DEAD MAN DIES *by Percy Marks* (CENTURY. $2.50)

THREE times married, Norah Dreyer was, nevertheless, obsessed by the memory of her first husband, Norman. After her children forbade her to seek for still another replica of their father, she clung to them with a jealous and possessive love simply because they were Norman's, interfering in their lives with all the energy of an exuberant nature. When they left her at last, despite her fierce struggles to hold them, she realized suddenly that, by relinquishing them and the house which Norman had built for her, she had finally freed herself from the domination of a dead man. There is material here for a fairly powerful book, but Norah is a childish and undisciplined figure, rather than passionate and dramatic.

THE GOOD RED BRICKS *by Mary Synon* (LITTLE, BROWN. $2.00)

MARY SYNON'S journalistic experience and her father's reminiscences of Chicago in the 'nineties have given her both material and background for her first novel. The book is divided into four parts, each with a musical term giving the key to its spirit. At the beginning of each section, a different phase of the great city is described and related to the events following. The story of Sally Gates's youth in political and sporting circles is closely interwoven with the life of the rapidly growing city. This girl, who so gaily and wholeheartedly gives her devotion and strength to the man she loves and through all her sorrows and defeats carries her courage like a banner, is a splendid figure.

THE SINGING GOLD *by Dorothy Cottrell* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN; $2.50)

IN CONTRAST to the scores of introspective problem novels, this story of the life of a girl brought up on a sheep ranch in Australia is decidedly refreshing. Mrs. Cottrell loves her native land and pictures its beauties and charms.

FLOWERDOWN *by Ann Knox* (CENTURY. $2.50)

MISS KNOX, of distinguished British ancestry, has assembled a *nouveau riche* American family and dropped them into Flowerdown to upset, as a bull in a china shop, the old, traditional home of the Flowerdowns. With a sympathetic keenness of perception she has handled difficult situations, finding a common meeting ground for the children of the two families. An honest picture of Americans in England.

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CRESCENDO *by Henry Bellamann* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

MR. BELLAMANN presents a particularly interesting and modern version of the familiar problem of two women and a man. Into the serene and unemotional lives of Robert Ives, an artist, and his wife, comes Leslie Pell, gay, young and very much alive. The story of Ives's love for the two women works up gradually to its climax. Astrid, the wife, is vague and shadowy, but Robert and Leslie are very real and human.

Detective and Mystery

CLOTH OF GOLD *by Elswyth Thane* (STOKES. $2.00)

ONE can recommend this sequel to *Riders of the Wind* as a rousing salute to adventure. In the remote hills of India, Blaise Dorin and his Viking love risk their lives once more to regain the sinister golden robe of the goddess Shir Shan, which wreaks such havoc because of its association with an ancient cult and because of its own jewel-encrusted beauty. Evil men, incapable of comprehending English integrity, strive with less worthy motives for the same desirable prize, but Blaise Dorin outwits them and honorably restores the troublesome robe to the remote monastery whence it came. This is a good yarn, packed tight with murder, chilling peril and Oriental mystery.

ARSÈNE LUPIN INTERVENES *by Maurice Le Blanc* (MACAULAY. $2.00)

TO THE familiar exploits of Arsène Lupin, supersleuth, Maurice Le Blanc has added a group of nine new interesting cases, each one a triumph of deduction and prowess. With his inimitable sang-froid, Lupin, alias Jim Barnett of the Barnett Agency, solves the difficulties of Inspector Béchoux and greatly enriches himself into the bargain.

THE MAN WHO NEVER BLUNDERED *by Sinclair Gluck* (DODD, MEAD. $2.00)

"THE GOVERNOR", master-mind of underworld activity, is caught eventually, as are all those "who never blunder". Before he is run down he manages to astound New York with several spectacular robberies.

THE SECRET OF SEA-DREAM HOUSE *by Albert Payson Terhune* (HARPERS. $2.00)

HIDDEN away in the Everglades is Sea-Dream House, long deserted by its pirate owner. Saul Tevvis, a successful young author, moves in and inadvertently stumbles on the secret that has mystified the native Floridians for nearly two centuries.

THE BISHOP MURDER CASE *by S. S. Van Dine* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.00)

PHILO VANCE, who assisted the District Attorney in solving *The Greene Murder Case,* is again called in to apprehend "the Bishop". Each murder is tied up with a Mother Goose rhyme, and Vance is sorely perplexed before he finds out "who killed Cock Robin", the murderer meanwhile having terrorized New York in a series of crimes of a character unparalleled for fiendishness.

DEATH AT FOUR CORNERS *by Anthony Gilbert* (DIAL PRESS. $2.00)

THE usual tranquillity of Four Corners is upset at the finding of the body of Raymond Charteris on the cliffs. Mr. Gilbert has written a seemingly unbelievable story of death, blackmail, a missing ear-drop and a veiled woman, and brought it to an unexpected conclusion.

THE TREASURE HOUSE OF MARTIN HEWS *by E. Phillips Oppenheim* (LITTLE, BROWN. $2.00)

A COLLECTOR of priceless treasures of art, Martin Hews, physically deformed but a master mind of lawlessness, finds himself fighting the very tools with which he works. With Major Owston, the unimaginative Englishman who joins his forces, he makes a final *coup d'état.* An unusual Oppenheim story, done to a turn and guaranteed to satisfy the mystery lover.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE XXX)

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THE BOOK MART

Not much more is to be expected in the way of great auction sales of books during the remainder of the season of 1928-29. The sale of the library of Jerome Kern is still being discussed, and a teapot tempest has raged as to whether or not this was really a "great library". There is no doubt that it was a great collection, but its rank as a library must be determined largely by one's conception of what books should form a library. Undoubtedly, it was not the kind of library that most book collectors, with the commercial element eliminated, would care to form. To one who owns a presentation copy of a "perfect *Pickwick* in parts", a dozen other presentation copies of the minor or commoner works of Dickens would have only a secondary interest, strengthening the library only as corroborative evidence strengthens the confession of the criminal in court. In its way, the Kern library was entitled to be called great, but the way of Mr. Kern as a collector might not be yours or mine. However, because he formed a library to suit only himself and then sold it because he pleased to do so is no reason why critics who are not pleased with Mr. Kern's selections or with his method of disposing of his books should froth at the mouth. A point of very much greater importance is the effect upon collectors of the extraordinarily high prices paid at the Kern sale. It is a vital matter to the collector of moderate means and to the dealer in second-hand books whether such prices will discourage collectors from pursuing their hobbies. The post-Kern sales of rare and desirable books have shown a general tendency toward a readjustment of values and it is not without significance that, at the Schweizer sale, following almost immediately upon the Kern sale, at the same galleries, first editions of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and some first editions of Kipling brought even higher prices than in the Kern dispersal. This was also the case in the Cohen sale at the American Art Galleries, where Spenser's *Colin Clout* and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass,* in first editions, went for higher prices than those paid in the Kern sale. On the other hand, many very desirable books of lower price continued to be taken at about the same prices as those predominating before the record-breaking event of January. It seems to be fairly well established, however, as long as our present prosperity continues and the stock market maintains high levels, that the rarest of books, which are luxuries, will be for the few and not for the many, and there will remain plenty of opportunities for the collector of more limited means to acquire books at reasonable prices which will give him a library both useful and beautiful.

One noticeable feature of the book mart in recent years has been the steady appreciation in the price of autographs of famous people and, especially, Lincoln autographs. Autograph letters signed by Lincoln are not really scarce. In fact, they are commoner than those of Presidents Wilson, Harding and Roosevelt, the typewriter having to a large extent done away with the hand-written letter. But more people are interested in Lincoln than in these other presidents, and the rise in price in the last two decades has been phenomenal. In 1914 the famous Lincoln collection of Major William H. Lambert of Philadelphia, which was started directly after the Civil War, was sold in New York by the Metropolitan Art Association. In that sale one lot consisted of twenty-four important historical letters written by Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull. The lot brought $10,710, an average of about $450 a letter, which made collectors gasp. Last December a single Lincoln letter

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THE BOOK MART

CHICAGO, ILL.

The Walden Book Shop
410 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

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in the Childs sale in Philadelphia was sold for $11,750, and the Lambert lot of Lincoln letters would be cheap today at $100,000. Even if such letters are only for the rich collector, however, there is a world full of material which is of historical and literary interest which can be bought at low prices—that is, low prices today.

It is, perhaps, necessary at this point to remark that not all scarce or old books or autographs of minor celebrities are valuable. But if a collector buys worthless stuff at a high price he has only himself to blame. The old collectors were pioneers. They bought books they liked, without any assurance that these books would reach high prices in the settlement of their estates—a factor which seems to influence modern collecting. There never was a time in the history of the world when the collector of rare books and autographs had as many aids as at present. Famous and near-famous authors, dead or living, have their bibliographies. Current book prices and priced auction catalogues give a line on the market values of books at auction sales, and dealers in rare books were never so ready to impart knowledge and help to the young collector. If one does not take advantage of these aids, he is likely to have a considerable account to charge up to experience.

In one respect, however, this country is lacking, and that is in bibliographical periodicals. Perhaps it is due to the supplying of special information about rare books in our monthly magazines, our literary weeklies and even the literary supplements of our daily papers, but there has never been for any long period any journal in this country devoted strictly to bibliography and rare books from the collector's point of view. One looks back to the days of the short-lived

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THE BOOK MART

Philobiblon, the *Bibliopolist,* Norton's *Literary Letter, The Bibliographer,* the *Literary Collector,* the *Americana Collector,* the *American Collector,* to name some of the principal ventures in this field, to see the shore strewn with financial wrecks. In England *The Bookman's Journal,* which started as a weekly, changed to a monthly and is now a quarterly. Yet with the number of book collectors constantly increasing and with a widespread interest in rare books generally and, above all, with collectors of seemingly unlimited wealth, this country does not support a single high-class periodical devoted solely to the interests of book and autograph collectors.

They order these things better in Austria, apparently. A publication of which Dr. Herbert Reichner, 19, Tiefer Graben, Vienna, is editor—*Philobiblon, eine Zeitschrift für Bucherliebhaber*—is now in its second year of publication with every appearance of prosperity. It is a quarto of forty-four pages with plates, entirely devoted to the interest of collectors. While published in German, it covers the whole field of book-collecting. From a careful article on Italian calligraphy and type-design in the Sixteenth Century, by Dr. Raffaello Bertieri, illustrated with plates of type-designs, one in color, it turns to such topics as the earliest books of alchemy, by Dr. Ernst Darmstaedter of Munich, and correspondence on book topics of the day from domestic and foreign centers. Here are recorded the doings of the Book Club of California, which gives a list of its publications of interest to American readers. Correspondence from the world of books records many items of American interest. There are departments of auction prices from Frankfort and London, publications of book clubs; auction calendar and booksellers' catalogues. We need these in this country.

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NOTES ON NEW BOOKS—(*continued*)

FOOTPRINTS *by Kay Cleaver Strahan* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

To RE-OPEN a twenty-year-old crime by means of a series of letters, written at the time of the murder so that a marriage may be consummated, is a decidedly novel plot for a detective story. The scene is laid at Q 2 ranch in Oregon. The book is not so bloodthirsty as most murder stories, but the death of Richard Quilter remains a mystery until the last page.

THE CORPSE ON THE BRIDGE *by Charles Barry* (DUTTON. $2.00)

A NEW brand of criminal invades England. Dom Bruno Chavasse, abbot of an English monastery, finds his flock dwindling and seeks the aid of Scotland Yard for the solution. In his investigations, Chief Inspector Gilmartin finds a connecting link between a corpse on Waterloo Bridge and the disappearance of secret plans for the revolutionizing of radiotelephony.

THE MARK OF THE DEAD *by The Aresbys* (WASHBURN. $2.00)

PARRISH DARBY disembarks at Honolulu to find himself an unwilling participant in an age-old horror. Sinister forces are at work in gloomy Waimea Bay, and it is only because of his deep-rooted affection for his friend, Hayes Collins, that "Parry" steels himself to the disagreeable task of ridding a haunted house of its ghosts. A well-turned mystery story of the Far East.

LANDRU *by F. A. Mackenzie* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.00)

HENRI DÉSIRÉ LANDRU is still spoken of in France as the modern Bluebeard. Woman after woman fell a victim to his inexplicable fascination. Of the hundreds he duped, ten disappeared and were never seen alive again. His trial was one of the spectacular events of the French courts, since his cleverness and foresight made it next to impossible to convict him. This sinister, yet fascinating man has given Mr. Mackenzie material which will interest the student of psychology.

SOME MEN AND WOMEN *by Marie Belloc Lowndes* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

IN THIS group of dramatic short stories, it is not so much the plot that is stressed as the effect on human nature of crime and tragedy, and the interest lies more in the reaction of the characters than in the events themselves.

THE FLYING SQUAD *by Edgar Wallace* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

ANN PERRYMAN, having allied herself with a huge dope ring operating in London in the hope of satisfying her thirst for vengeance against the police who murdered her brother, discovers many unforeseen things. A typical Edgar Wallace story, keen to the last page.

THE SPECTACLES OF MR. CAGLIOSTRO *by Harry S. Keeler* (DUTTON. $2.00)

A MYSTERY tale for tired members of the medical profession—and others. Imagine yourself perfectly rational, incarcerated in an insane asylum as the victim of a dastardly plot, yet every word and gesture you make confirming the original diagnosis—a perfect case of paranoia. And to cap this, out of your father's estate of ten million dollars, you received only $75.00 a month and an old pair of spectacles. An improbable, but a corking good story.

A SELF-MADE THIEF *by Hulbert Footner* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

CONTEMPT for bungling thieves causes Frank Heberdon, a young lawyer, to plan and execute brilliant robberies, and his egotism leads him a long and spectacular dance. The action is at all times exciting and swift. The real charm in this book lies in the eccentricities of this dapper attorney, and will interest the lover of this brand of story, depicting the thieving man who becomes self-made in crime.

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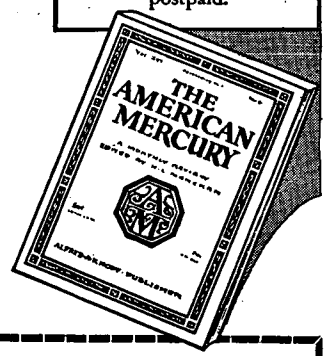

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